

Workshop Meeting
Lamar County Board of Commissioners
11-12-2024
9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. on November 12th, 2024. Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Gilles, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson.

Workshop Meeting Items for Discussion

Jute Wilson, Lamar County Superintendent

Expressed appreciation for the partnership with Lamar County School System.
Distributed school swag (blue and red) and highlighted an upcoming home football game.

Noise Ordinance Discussion

Reviewed sound level limits (50 ft at night, 100 ft during the day).
Discussed the need for a measurable standard, potentially using a decibel meter for consistent enforcement. Other counties are using decibel meters for sound measurements.
Commissioner Thrash expressed concerns about enforceability, citing that the current ordinance lacks clear guidelines. A Law enforcement perspective was shared by Major Holmes, emphasizing issues deputies face due to ambiguity in enforcement. Major Holmes stated property lines need to be taken into consideration for violations. The deputies do go to houses or properties when complaints are made and most of the time that owner makes the necessary adjustments for the complaint. If a number system is put in place the deputies can determine if there is a violation. Major Holmes suggested a 3-month period to implement calibrated equipment for sound measurement. She provided the board with a Noise Barrier Fact Sheet from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

EXP Road Improvement Discussion (Rocksprings Road, Chappell Mill, High Falls Road)

Richie Swindell of EXP introduced himself. He retired from GDOT where he served for over 20 years and has been with EXP for the past five years. Stated funds from GDOT have been secured for this project. There are four different sites with resurfacing of the roads around those sites. The campus is off Rock Springs Road and is about one mile from Chappell Mill to High Falls Road. Chappell Mill on the backside of the property, the back entrance of the campus of Rock Springs Church is a three-mile section from State Route 36 to the Butts County line. There will be shoulder widening, and resurfacing. The High Falls section of the roadway is 2.6 miles and runs from State Route 36 to Chappell Mill Road. Presented traffic studies and design plans to alleviate congestion, including right and left turn and right turn lanes and resurfacing and patching that they have been working on for over eight months with the GDOT, the Schools and others involved in the project. There will be turn lanes off of Chappell Mill Campus Road. There will be a left turn and right turn lane into the campus off Chappell Mill Road. There will be a long turn lane and striping's and crosswalks on Rock Springs Road. They went through the Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE)

for determination regarding a Roundabout on Rock Springs Road however the cost was over a million dollars. EPD will be involved in the plans due to the large scope of the project. Discussed GDOT funding involvement and milestones for the project including trucking cost. Emphasized long-term durability with 3-inch asphalt depth and structured enhancements for road stability. Mr. Swindell said this project will allow for the roads to last approximately 20 years. Mr. Swindell stated the next step in the project is to advertise an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a contractor.

Public Works Truck Replacement

County Administrator Townsend presented quotes for replacing a 2006 Chevrolet Truck that was burnt. He compared Peterbilt and Kenworth models. The quote from MHC is for a new 2025 Kenworth T280 priced at \$146,344.00. The Staff recommends the Kenworth truck with SPLOST funds covering costs.

Vehicle for Planning and Community Development

County Administrator Townsend presented quotes for a new Nissan Rogue from Chronic Nissan priced at \$37,386.00 with SPLOST funding. He compared the quote from Chronic Nissan with other options from Ford \$45,000 and Toyota \$40,000. Commissioner Thrash suggested a leasing option due to maintenance and repair costs. The Attorney stated it was not a legal option for the County to lease vehicles.

2023 Audit Review by Mauldin and Jenkins

The presentation from Mauldin and Jenkins was delayed until 11:00 AM for in-depth review.

The Board Reviewed the Regular Business Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation- Pastor Allen Newman from Calvary Baptist Church
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - Workshop Meeting (Oct 8, 2024)
 - Regular Business Meeting (Oct 15, 2024)
 - Budget Workshop Meeting (Oct 24, 2024)
 - Special Called Meeting (Oct 24, 2024)
6. Board Appointments

- Industrial Development Authority Board
 - Charles Glass (Term: Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2028)
 - Glenn Allen (Term: Jan 1, 2025 - Dec 31, 2028)

7. Old Business

- Ordinance 2024-11: Animal Control Ordinance, updates on revisions, donations, shelter status, and fencing.
- Update on Tyler White: Discusses history with Spalding County Animal Control and current role in Upson County.

8. New Business

- Ordinance 2024-12: Rezoning request for four acres at Midway and Hwy 36, Planning Commission approved with buffer and fencing conditions.
- Resolution 2024-12: Fee Schedule adjustments, including minor sign permit cost changes.
- Alcohol License Renewal: Discussion on VFW liquor license and potential referendum.
- 2023 Audit Approval
- Proposal: ACCG-IRMA PTSD Program (\$12,510 annually).
- Surplus Declaration: Chevrolet 2008 Truck for salvage.

9. Public Comment

None

10. Round Table Discussion

11. Executive Session

- Real Estate
- Litigation
- Personnel

12. Adjournment

Workshop Agenda Continuation

Conflict Attorney Amy Cowan Update

Ms. Cowan briefed the Board of Commissioners on potential legal action related to the removal and appointment actions taken by the Board. Ms. Cowan gave a brief update. She said she was requested to meet with the attorneys for the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) in person. That meeting took place last week. The SWA is requesting that you rescind your removal and appointment actions from the last meeting as well as the motion related to the City of Milner. Ms. Cowan said her position on this is based upon her legal analysis is that the removal and appointment action that the County took are supported by the law. Ms. Cowan said the City of Milner motion itself did not take or authorize the specific action so if they want to take any action, she felt a further motion would be needed and that would depend on the particular circumstances at the time. Ms. Cowan said she did not know if they were there yet with anything that relates to the City of Milner. Mrs. Cowan said this is all for the Board of Commissioners to take into consideration. Ms. Cowan said that SWA has threatened to take legal action if those motions are not rescinded.

Chairman Traylor clarified that Ms. Cowan felt that the law supports the motions and asked if legal action is taken does she feel confident in defending any legal action. Ms. Cowan said she could not guarantee any kind of specific outcome and obviously is arguing different sides of the positions, but said she believes that the law supports the removal and appointment actions that were taken at the last meeting. Ms. Cowan said she is not sure, and it was not clear what the specific action threatened is. She said if there is something more specific received, they can make an analysis. Ms. Cowan said the position that the SWA has taken is that the removal action has to go to the Governor's Office and Ms. Cowan said she disagrees with this analysis because the law states otherwise.

Chairman Traylor asked if Ms. Cowan had any type of period and how long this would draw out from a cost standpoint. Ms. Cowan said she had no indication of this for now and she has no idea of the specific action that will be taken. Ms. Cowan said there are a number of significant hurdles that would have to be overcome to file suit on this. She said she has no time frame clause and obviously if a lawsuit is filed it would be time consuming, and said she does not have the specifics as to what the actual action would be. Ms. Cowan said she is not sure that the SWA board has met on the legal action. Vice-Chair Gilles said they had not met about it and that is why she is astonished to hear all of this because as a board they have not met for executive session. Vice-Chair Gilles said she does not know where this is coming from because as a member of the board, she has absolutely no clue. Vice-Chair Gilles said she is furious and frustrated by this whole process and it needs to stop now. She said that continuing law firms and Legacy is wasting Lamar County's taxpayer and SWA dollars that can be spent somewhere else, and she is done with this situation.

Commissioner Fletcher addressed Ms. Cowan and said the SWA attorneys took time to meet with her about the removal and the reappointments to the SWA board, but nothing was addressed regarding the actual audit they have been discussing for months. Ms. Cowan said she mentioned that during the meeting, so they did discuss it. She said she was stonewalled on that by virtue of the removal and appointment issues because that was thrown back. Ms. Cowan said she forwarded correspondence from their attorneys and herself to the Board of Commissioners, where a statement was in there where she suggested a different engineering outcome. Ms. Cowan said this was not the case, she suggested that they hear from their engineer if that would help to move things forward

if they are not going to allow our engineer in there. Ms. Cowan said of course they still want to do the engineering audit. She said yes, she brought it up and the general response received was that they certainly were not doing anything when they had this appointment issue before us. Chairman Traylor requested that Ms. Cowan keep them posted.

Commissioner Thrash said for the record and, she feels they are getting some bad legal advice from the Conflict Counsel. She said it was risky for the taxpayers and moving forward it is going to end up costing the taxpayers lots and lots and lots of money. Vice-Chair Gilles attempted to speak, and Commissioner Thrash said she was talking. Commissioner Thrash said she thinks that it is very risky and taking any action on this bad legal advice is very risky for the County.

Commissioner Fletcher said it has already cost them thousands and thousands of dollars. He said if the SWA board has not met to give the attorney direction, who is making these decisions. Commissioner Fletcher said it has cost money, and it is going to continue to cost money if they keep operating. Commissioner Thrash said they do not know if there was a meeting to authorize that and without having someone to speak, we do not know that they did not happen. Vice-Chair Gilles said she is a member of the SWA board. Commissioner Thrash said this was before she was appointed to the board. Vice-Chair Gilles said Commissioner Thrash's appointment was taken away after she was appointed to the board, so yes if there was any illegal or whatever meeting that was held, she was not a part of it. Vice-Chair Gilles said there was no meeting and nothing has happened, so she understands Commissioner Fletcher's argument. She said this is a waste of time and money. Vice-Chair Gilles said they are not going to continue to operate with a rogue board in the County. Commissioner Thrash asked if there were some issues with scheduling and the ability to get together because she knows everyone has court. Ms. Cowan said they worked together to schedule a meeting over a couple of weeks. She says there was a date proposed, and Mr. Richard had an appointment he had to go to, so it was just a couple of weeks' worth of scheduling. Ms. Cowan said she received a request to meet just after the last meeting and there was a SWA that was scheduled but was cancelled just after the last meeting.

Chairman Traylor said he believes that no one thought that going into this that this was not going to cost a lot of money. He said to Ms. Cowan to keep plugin away and said that they know that this is going to continue to cost. Chairman Traylor said he was trying to get a time frame as to whether it was processed and how long it would take to go before a judge. He said that everyone knew that this was going to be a long road and not an easy process. Commissioner Thrash said absolutely. Ms. Cowan said it would be hard without having more information as to what the actual action would be. She said if they end up to that effect, she can provide information as to what is happening.

Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend stated that with the Rock Springs Project they will have to acquire property and Attorney Mayfield provided him with a letter to send to the property owners. He has also contacted Surveyor James Butler to assist with this to make sure the pins are properly placed, and that new plats and pins are provided. Once this is done, he will be able to send out an RFP.

County Administrator Townsend stated that a soft opening for the Lamar County Animal Shelter would be in February. He stated that no grand opening has been done for the Gym renovation, the

new Administration Building, or the Animal Shelter. He said new plaques with the Commissioners will also be put up in the new Administration Building.

County Administrator Townsend reported that he is working on lighting and door issues in the new Administration Building.

Public Comment

None

Round Table Discussion

Commissioner Traylor recognized efforts by the Elections Office and provided voter statistics and cost per election insights. He gave Commissioner Lovett kudos for looking at the per cost for the recent Elections. Chairman Traylor said they need to think about per cost for the Recreation Department, per kid, the Senior Center, per cost, per Senior and per cost for all of the Services that are provided in the County.

Mrs. Perry from Elections stated that 11,000 people voted and there were 15,000 people registered. She said an Elections cost around \$25,000.00.

Chairman Traylor thanked Superintendent Wilson and his wife for visiting and addressing the Board of Commissioners and provided them with some great swag.

Recess the Workshop Meeting

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to recess the Workshop Meeting at 10:19 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Vice-Chair Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Reconvene the Workshop Meeting

Chairman Traylor reconvened the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

Mauldin and Jenkins Audit Review

Overview of Auditor Reports: The audit provided a strong set of auditor reports, reflecting thorough compliance with standards and best practices.

Presenter Background: Mr. Kirk Arich shared his background, highlighting 13 years as a CPA and 12 years with the firm, with experience in government and city audits.

Auditor's Discussion & Analysis

Key Topics Discussed:

Upcoming Accounting Standards:

Discussion on new accounting standards and the implications for audit procedures.

Emphasis on compliance with Generally Accepted Government Standards and federal regulations of the United States.

Independent Auditor's Report:

Issued a "clean" or unmodified opinion, which is the highest level of assurance.

Repeated findings were noted, typical for counties of this size, but no significant compliance issues were found.

Single Audit and ARP Compliance:

Completed the compliance audit for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds with no findings. Compliance with federal funding standards was also confirmed.

Board of Health and Other Regional Entities:

Updates on various audits, including the Board of Health, Regional SWA, and the Barnesville Library.

Requirement for a single audit due to the \$1 million grant for fire trucks was highlighted.

Year-End Financial Review:

The cash and unassigned fund balance were reviewed and deemed adequate to carry the organization into the next fiscal year.

ARPA funds were effectively utilized, and SPLOST funds were appropriately allocated to capital expenses.

Findings:

Department-Specific Issues:

Findings involved several departments, including the Recreation Department, Probate, Sheriff, and Tax Commissioner's Office.

Noted a common need for better controls over bank statement reconciliations, often handled by a single person.

Procedural Improvements:

Issues with closing procedures and software were identified, but improvements are expected in the next cycle.

Mail handling procedures and segregation of duties were addressed.

Financial Reporting:

Emphasis on timely submission of financial reports.

Next Steps and Follow-Up:

Additional Assistance: County Administrator Townsend will assist with questions and ensure smooth operations with compliance.

Staffing Adjustments: Additional staff will be added to support the segregation processes, enhancing control over key areas.

Board Contact: Board members were encouraged to reach out with any further questions.

Adjournment

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to adjourn the Workshop Meeting at 11:32 a.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