

**Lamar County Board of Commissioners**  
**Regular Business Meeting**  
**April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Gilles, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. The meeting was available via Teams Meeting.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation**

Everyone said the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Dave George of the Graceview Church gave the invocation.

**III. Agenda Approval**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Recess for Public Hearing**

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to recess for the Public Hearings. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion.

**V. Public Hearings**

- 1) Fellowship Drive-Request to Place Manufactured Home on Site Built Only Restricted Property-Tax Map 033,Parcel 122.

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the Board. The application is for a variance requested by Eddie and Kathryn Scott to place a manufactured home on a stick-built-only restricted property in the early 2000's. This property was part of a subdivision but is behind houses and cannot be seen from the road. It is two lots joined together making a little over 9 acres. The Planning Commission heard the request, and during the discussion, it was thought to be for a modular home rather than a manufactured home, which has some differences. The applicants have fallen in love with a manufactured home that is 2400 square feet and has sheetrock throughout. The approval from the Planning Commission was for a Modular Home. Planning and Community Development Director Buice provided pictures of the Manufactured home.

**Public Comments**

Kathy Scott of 581 Old Milner Road addressed the Board. Mrs. Scott said she and her husband purchased the 9-acre property in November, hoping to provide a couple of acres for their grandson to build a home. The acreage butts up against their family

property. When they started looking at the permits, they realized that their 9 acres were actually two lots from a subdivision that was developed in 2002. The developers dissolved the company in 2005. There is a restriction that it has to be a stick-built home. Mrs. Scott said that she and her husband are nearing their 70s, and her parents, who lives next door to them, are in their 80s, and it would be nice to have them near to help them when needed. Their grandson is employed by the Lamar County School system, and his wife is employed by the Upson Regional Hospital, she has to live within 30 minutes of the hospital as she is frequently on call. Mrs. Scott said there would be minimal removal of trees and there is a driveway around lot 18.

Carolyn Kitchings of 561 Old Milner Road addressed the Board. Mrs. Kitchings said that they fought for the subdivision but did not realize there were restrictions. These are their great-grandchildren, and she wants them home. They have chosen to live and work in Lamar County and they are a lot of help to her and the family, weed eating, cutting grass, and helping with computer problems. Mrs. Kitchings requested they approve the request.

Destiny Scott addressed the Board and stated that she is married to the grandson Zachary Scott. Mrs. Scott said that because she works for Upson Regional Hospital and he works for the Lamar County School system, she does not want to have to pick her life up and move to another County. She said that she wants to start a family here. The manufactured home they plan to purchase comes in sections and is 2400 square feet. It has four bedrooms and three bathrooms. It will be assembled on a foundation with no wheels attached. Mrs. Scott requested the application be approved because she does not want to leave her family.

Donald Hartman, 507 Old Milner Road, addressed the Board. Mr. Hartman said he is part of the family making the request. He said they have a lot of property from Grove Street North and towards the flour mill. His property and his Uncle's property back up to Carolyn Kitching's property and the Scott's property. Mr. Hartman said he has not completed building his house, and his 78-year-old Uncle will be living with them so they can take care of him. Mr. Hartman said there is nothing bigger than having family together and asked for approval of the request.

Commissioner Lovett said five homes were built in front of this property and asked if anyone objected. He also asked if they were notified. Planning and Community Development Director Buice said all of the surrounding neighborhoods had been notified by letter, and Public Hearing signs were placed on the property. She said the County does not have an overall restriction on manufactured homes, and they are allowed in Agriculture-Residential. This property is zoned Agriculture-Residential, but when the property was originally formed, it was a part of the subdivision, and anything facing Fellowship Drive also applies to this lot. There was no opposition to this request. Currently the property is two separate lots until a survey is done to combine the lots.

Vice-Chair Gilles inquired about the difference between this request on Fellowship Drive and the request on Ethridge Mill Road. Planning and Community Development Director Buice explained that the one on Ethridge Mill Road had to do with the size of the lot. The applicant asked for 2 acres with a manufactured home, which was also on the road front and would be completely visible. Also, every house around the property was a larger stick-built home. The current request is on a large lot and cannot be seen from the road.

The restriction was placed on the property 20 years ago, and there is no longer a Homeowners Association (HOA) to continue with the restrictions as the subdivision owners are no longer available.

2) Veterans Parkway and Yatesville Road

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the Board. This rezoning application is for Stephen Smith to rezone 6 acres of a 20-acre tract located at the corner of Veterans Parkway and Yatesville Road (tax map 049, parcel 006B). Mr. Smith desires to have a cabinet shop at this location. The Planning Commission recommended approval and there was no opposition.

**VI. Reconvene Regular Business Meeting**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to reconvene the Regular Business Meeting. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**VII. Minutes Approval**

Commissioner Thrash made a motion to approve the following minutes. Vice-Chair Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- i. Workshop Minutes-March 14th, 2024
- ii. Public Hearing Minutes-March 19th, 2024
- iii. Regular Business Minutes-March 19th, 2024
- iv. Special Called Meeting-March 21st, 2024

**VIII. Proclamations**

Commissioner Thrash presented the Division of Family and Children Services a proclamation proclaiming April as National Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month. This month, 50 pinwheels are displayed outside the Lamar County Court House, representing the number of substantiated Child Abuse and Neglect cases in Lamar County in 2024. The Board of Commissioners of Lamar County declared and proclaimed April 2024 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in Lamar County and urged all our citizens to work together to make this year a safer one for children in our community.

Commissioner Thrash presented a Proclamation to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The month of April bears special significance since it marks both the beginning and the ending of the War Between the States. Confederate Memorial Day is a time when Georgians honor the estimated 258,000 Confederate servicemen who died in military service in the Southern armies defending their home states and country. The Board of Commissioners of Lamar County declared and proclaimed April 2024 as Confederate History and Heritage Month and April 13th, 2024, as Confederate Memorial Day.

**IX. Ordinance 2024-03**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-03- Veterans Parkway and Yatesville Road-Rezoning from Highway Commercial (C2) to Manufacturing 1 (M1) (Tax Map 049, Parcel 006) with the restriction of a 75 Ft. Buffer along the east, south, and west property lines. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**X. Resolution 2024-01-Fellowship Drive**

Commissioner Fletcher made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-01 Fellowship Drive. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. Commissioner Thrash stated for the record that the manufactured home will be placed on a concrete slab. The motion passed unanimously.

**XI. Resolution 2024-02-Lamar County Comprehensive Plan Adoption**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-02 Lamar County Comprehensive Plan Adoption. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**XII. Hauling Rock from Vulcan to Turner Bridge Road**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to table the Hauling Rock from Vulcan to Turner Bridge Road. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**XIII. Animal Shelter-Naming Rights Research**

Tom Wellner addressed the Board. Mr. Wellner said the animal shelter has always been a private/public endeavor. They have the money either in pocket or pledged to get this done. Those who are supporters of the animal shelter are working on a way to support the shelter in the future so that the taxpayers are not shouldering the burden. Mr. Wellner said they thought of adoption fees and private donations, but naming rights for the animal shelter was one they had not considered. Having a naming right allows public and private companies and individuals to pay the County to put their name on the wall and on a plaque. The County can then use the revenue from selling those rights to support the animal shelter. Mr. Wellner said specific spots can be used for selling naming rights, such as dog runs, lobby areas, etc. Mr. Wellner requested the approval to develop a program for naming rights. There is no plan yet, but they need to get the word out through the local paper and other resources. Mr. Wellner said now is the time to test the appetite of the County. He said that it is the perfect time to supplant taxpayer money.

Commissioner Fletcher made a motion to endorse Mr. Wellner to go forward with his research on the naming rights for the animal shelter. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**XIV. Tax Assessor Update**

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the Board with the Board of Assessors meeting results. Mrs. Haddock said the value of a house is \$90 a square foot, and since 2019, the values have been going up due to what houses are selling for in the County. She presented different options to the Board of Assessors: \$90.00, \$100.00, and \$105.00 a square foot. The Board of Assessors decided against doing a reassessment this year because the taxpayers need a break. Since then, they have received a call from the School board who wants to meet about the impact this decision will have on the school system. Mrs. Haddock reported they will probably lose money with the utilities. She said the digest went up about 22 million dollars and the rollback rate for the County would need to be rolled back to .913, and the school would have to roll it back to 13.6 and if they go to \$105.00 a square foot, they school would have to roll the millage back to 12. The school will probably keep the millage rate and the values the same.

Mrs. Haddock said the Department of Revenue will review her digest on Thursday. They will review their policies and procedures and everything they do. If they were to site her, she would have three years to make any corrections. Mrs. Haddock said a neighboring county is going through a peer review process, which could cost them a lot of money. She said they want to avoid being in this situation because the Department of Revenue could come in and tell the Board of Commissioners she needs new employees, a new car, a new flight, or whatever she needs to run her office.

Mrs. Haddock mentioned that the \$400.00 credit for the Homestead Exemption that everyone received from the Governor last year will not be on the tax bill for 2024. The assessment notices will not reflect this amount as seen on your tax bill. Also, she suggested that they check with their mortgage companies to be sure they do not down their escrow because of this \$400.00 exemption and also the taxes went down because the millage rate went down last year. The millage rate was the lowest rate since 2010. Mrs. Haddock said if anyone needed assistance they could contact the Tax Assessor's office for help.

Mrs. Haddock explained that a digest review is every three years so the next one will be in 2026. She said hopefully, the market will slow down. The values are still holding and the sales have slowed down. Things are staying on the market a lot longer. The issue they see happening is older homes are being sold for a higher price than their value. In the City of Barnesville, homes are being remodeled and sold for a higher price. Mrs. Haddock concluded by saying that they cannot keep punishing the taxpayers so they are not doing a reassessment.

## **XV. Administrator's Report**

County Administrator Townsend reported that the administration staff has been busy with an upgrade migration from ERP 9 to ERP 10 using the Tyler Tech ERP System.

County Administrator Townsend reported the following:

The Administration Staff has been busy with an upgrade migration from ERP 9 to ERP 10 with the Tyler Tech ERP System, so the data for the following has been challenging.

- i. AmeriPro Health Report:  
206 Transported, 107 Refusals, 20 Cancellations, Response Time:7:55  
Mutual Aid Report Upson County 18
- ii. Expenditures for the Departments should be at 25.00 percent and are at 20.71 percent.
- iii. Reported that in April they paid the Retirement Pension Plan for \$443,000.00 which will hit in May.
- iv. Reported that he is meeting with MJR Solutions tomorrow morning to look at a plan for the Courthouse Roof.
- v. Reported that in March \$157,404.71 was received for the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST).
- vi. Reported that in March \$276,179.18 was received for the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST IV).
- vii. Reported that in March \$254,114.53 was received for the Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax (T.S.P.L.O.S.T.).
- viii. Reported that a new plaque for the history of Lamar County has come in and will be placed at the Courthouse. He showed the plaque via Teams.

- ix. Addressed Elaine Hallada regarding her Public Comment about eliminating Public Comments and said the real reason was to have a guideline with structure in meetings and protocols. He was not actually comparing to other counties but having policy and procedures for Lamar County. The research was done in the County Clerk listserv. He said the County Manager, Finance, and Human Resources also use listservs to obtain information. This is used within 159 counties, so a lot of responses have been received. He said that the County Manager from Camden County requested information about policies, procedures, and protocols, so they sent the same request to the County Clerks listserv to see what policies, procedures, and protocols were used.
- x. Addressed the comment from Diane Perry regarding the Lamar County plaque and thanked her for letting him know it was not up. He said the Maintenance Director was waiting on the Public Works Department to install the pole. He addressed the Maintenance Director and requested that the plaque be installed by the end of the week. It was set in concrete the next morning by 10:00 a.m.
- xi. Addressed Donald Hartman regarding updates from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). He said the GDOT would like to install a Red Light where Hwy 36 comes in onto Hwy 41. The plan is to put it out for bid in the late Fall of 2024. He said they are requesting a right turn but it is a quick response project. The GDOT cap on the project is \$200,000.00. If Lamar County partners with GDOT, it would cost between \$25,000.00 and \$50,000.00. This is also the same area where Atlanta Street runs into Hwy 41. They could have a stop sign or a decel lane that goes out. The benefit to this would be to remove the bridge, eliminating any maintenance on the bridge.
- xii. Addressed Dwight Fleming's concern by giving him the RFP on Van Buren and Johnstonville Road.
- xiii. Reported the footing for the new Lamar County Animal Shelter has been dug out. They have the block ready to go at the site. He has a contract to test the asphalt so they do not get a bad batch.

Chairman Traylor addressed County Administrator Townsend and his lack of experience when he was first hired. Chairman Traylor applauded him for his willingness to obtain knowledge and trainings and his desire to learn. He is always learning new ways to improve processes, including a new budget process, which creates a plan in the event that he is no longer with the County. Chairman Traylor thanked him for the sacrifices he makes for his family.

## **XVI. Public Comments**

Ned West of 168 Farm Road, Milner addressed the Board. Mr. West made a public comment about a public post that Commissioner Thrash made on social media on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, regarding her signs being stolen. Mr. West said, " So, now my signs are being stolen, and when someone resorts to these tactics to get elected, this should raise a red flag for everyone. Aren't cameras wonderful?" Mr. West said she followed it up with, "Desperate people do desperate things." Mr. West said he took exception to that. He said the insinuation is clear. Only two people are running for Commissioner; Commissioner Thrash and Truman Boyle. You insinuate that Mr. Boyle is a thief. This is a serious insinuation and should be addressed in public. Mr. West said 42 years ago, he met Truman Boyle when he came to work for the State Patrol. He can personally vouch for him as an operator, radio room, trooper, and personal friend. Mr. Boyle has had a spotless career with the State Patrol, and he is a

member of the First Baptist Church of Barnesville, a husband, father, and grandfather. His reputation is beyond reproach. He is a man of integrity and honesty and has never, not now, not in the past or the present, been any kind of thief. Mr. West said he would give Commissioner Thrash the benefit of the doubt because maybe he misspoke or received some bad information. Mr. West said that maybe someone removed the signs beyond her control so that Mr. Boyle could be blamed. He said that it could be resolved with one simple gesture. You insinuated that you have pictures and you can bring all of this to a close by showing us your pictures. Mr. West said he knows; Mr. Boyle knows and everyone in the room knows that you do not have a picture of Mr. Boyle taking a sign of hers off the road. Mr. West said Commissioner Thrash said desperate people do desperate things. She should be ashamed and you owe Mr. Boyle a public apology and a public retraction. Mr. West said she could change his mind and anyone's mind in the room by showing them a picture of Mr. Boyle taking a sign, and he would give her a public apology, and he would not vote for Truman Boyle. Mr. West said going forward produce the pictures or stop the insinuations and attempt to run an honest and civil campaign.

Gregg Martin of 626 Piedmont Road addressed the Board. Mr. Martin said that after attending the workshop meeting last week, he realized no one was going to discuss what was happening with the Solid Waste Authority (SWA), and he had to ask, "Why not?" The citizens of the County have repeatedly asked for updates. They want to know the project's status and when it will be up and running and generating the income as promised. Mr. Martin said that the 27.5 million dollar loan is not going away. He said the original intent of having 2 Commissioners serve on the SWA board was to make sure the project served the County's best interest and to report back. Mr. Martin said this certainly is not what is happening, and more than likely, they are looking out for the SWA and keeping the citizens from knowing the truth. Mr. Martin said they also wanted to know the status of the Conflict Legal Counsel and what the lawyer found out about the 2 SWA board members being allowed to vote on the issue of a forensic audit. Mr. Martin said a lot of money has been wasted on this project and continues to be wasted: big ads totaling over \$1,000.00, legal fees, and lawsuits. He said ignoring the problem does not make it go away. It does not make our citizens feel well-represented. We need Commissioners who will work for us and not the SWA.

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeple Chase addressed the Board. Mrs. Hallada thanked the Board for approving the construction of the animal shelter, but it was too bad that it had taken over five years to start the construction. She said the plaque at the Courthouse looks great. Mrs. Hallada asked for the results of the Conflict Counsel. The taxpayers are paying for this service. She asked how much money had been spent on the Conflict Counsel and other attorney fees and court costs. They keep blocking the investigation of the Lamar County Solid Waste Authority (SWA). Is the result that you can sit and vote on both boards. Mrs. Hallada said she was a no. If the results are that any of you can be on both boards then voting to stall the investigation is a conflict of interest. Mrs. Hallada said she wanted to know. She said she lives in Redbone. They have no curbs, sidewalks, lightning, or fire hydrants. Mrs. Hallada said their taxes reflect the lack of these services, and their insurance rates are sky-high because of poor planning in the past. Since she does not have the same services as other people in this County, she realizes that she and her neighbors have paid for the services of the Conflict Counsel, attorney fees, and court costs. Mrs. Hallada requested the amount paid to be revealed to the taxpayers because this has been stalled long enough. She asked that they give them the

investigation the taxpayers have requested or resign. The SWA is now over 17 million dollars behind in paying into the Lamar County tax base. She asked how will they ever recover from this deficit.

Harold Jackson of 200 Laurel Drive addressed the Board. Mr. Jackson thanked Elaine Hallada for her comments. He said he would like to know what the Conflict Counsel has advised the Board. Mr. Jackson said he believes the Board should tell them what they have advised and what it has cost. He asked why all of this stuff is a secret. Mr. Jackson said he stood behind Mrs. Hallada.

Cindy Bushby of 155 Redbone Run addressed the Board. Mrs. Bushby asked why they were not looking for elected officials in Lamar County to serve on the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) board. She said it is a conflict of interest for 2 of the Commissioners to be on the SWA board. Mrs. Bushby said it appears that they are stalling to release to the public the advice you received from the Conflict Counsel until after the May Primary election.

Donald Hartman of 507 Old Milner Road Milner addressed the Board. Mr. Hartman said he spoke about having a town hall meeting before the last board meeting and wondered if there had been any future discussion on this and if one had been scheduled. He thanked County Administrator Townsend for the follow-up. Mr. Hartman said that there was a large traffic jam this past week on Fellowship Drive. He said he did not know the communication cycle between the railroad, County, and Sheriff's Office. Mr. Hartman said he saw a commercial vehicle headed into the Industrial Park on the wrong side of the traffic. Mr. Hartman said he did not know the protocol with the CSX railroad. Mr. Hartman asked if County Administrator Townsend had tracked the attendance of the online Teams meeting and wanted to know how many people were watching the meeting. He asked if they were getting the message of the meeting to the citizens properly. Mr. Hartman said he would like to see more names on the screen.

Dave Rumfelt of 211 Spencer Street addressed the Board. Mr. Rumfelt said when it was first started, he attended meetings. Mr. Rumfelt said he was concerned about the volunteers, so he started a non-profit organization called "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter." This non-profit should take the burden off the County to run the facility. The idea is to raise funds through public events and save people from further taxes. Mr. Rumfelt said a lot of people are interested and he needs to set a date and time for the first meeting.

Diane Perry of 101 Maple Drive addressed the Board. Mrs. Perry said she started complaining many months ago when she found out repairing the new plaque was not a priority. She acknowledged and thanked County Administrator Townsend for getting the Historical Marker plaque at the Courthouse up and stated the history of Lamar County is important. Mrs. Perry would like to have historical markers in the community that are not already in place. It makes people interested in the County and it is important to acknowledge the history. She requested they get a group together to see what is going on in the community so they can make it better. Mrs. Perry said she agreed with the comments made tonight, including Mr. West's comments about the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) and the comments made about the Conflict Council. She said the Board members are not letting the citizens know



anything, and if you cannot tell them because they are sitting behind the podium, why not put some letter in the paper and acknowledge the public? Mrs. Perry said it would stop many of the comments being made. They need to think about how the community is being torn apart because they do not know what is happening and how to make it a better place to live and thrive.

Dixie Benson of 399 Grove Street addressed the Board. Mrs. Benson said she was proud of the Board for working together. She said she wondered if this directly resulted from the expenditure for the Conflict Council Attorney. Mrs. Benson said she was proud of them.

## **XVII. Round Table**

Vice-Chair Gilles wished her daughter Cassey a very Happy Birthday.

Commissioner Thrash said regarding the sign issue she knows that Mr. Boyle did not take her signs. She said she know he would not take her signs. Commissioner Thrash asked Mr. Boyle if he took her signs and he responded no. She said this was over and done with and said she would take her post down. Commissioner Thrash said this campaign has turned into one of the ugliest things she has ever been involved in in her entire life. Let Mr. Boyle and herself run their campaign and let the citizens vote for whomever they want to go back into office. Commissioner Thrash said she probably could have worded her post differently. She said she knows who took the signs and she is not going to prosecute someone for taking campaign signs. She said she went back and replaced them. Commissioner Thrash said Mr. Boyle answered her question and this is a done deal.

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the public. Mrs. Haddock said there are homestead exemptions that many people have not taken. You can get the homestead exemption at 62, if you are not working, or 65 and older. The deadline for 2024 was April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, but you can still apply for it year-round. Also, the Lamar County Schools are looking into tax exemptions if you are 70 or older. If you have questions, please get in touch with the Tax Assessor Office.

Chairman Traylor thanked the Scotts for choosing to live in Lamar County and suggested they get involved in the community. He applauded them for the affordable choice and said he has done a lot of research on manufactured homes, and for the cost, it is a smart move. Chairman Traylor mentioned that the first Tailgate talk will be in District 3, and they are hosting it at the new gymnasium in the parking lot. The date should be announced in the next few weeks. They will have some type of food, such as BBQ sliders. The Commissioners and the staff will be in attendance as this will be an opportunity to talk and answer questions for any concerns they may have.

## **XVIII. Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Gilles made a motion to Adjourn the Regular Business Meeting at approximately 8:22 p.m. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Ryran Traylor, Chairman

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Ashley Gilles, Vice-Chair

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Jarrod Fletcher, Commissioner

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk