

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the January 02, 2024

Regular Commissioners Meeting

6:00 P.M.

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Eddie Rowland, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Chairman Tapley introduced new IT employees Boyd Elrod and Tracey Stille.

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Rowland gave the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Tapley led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Tapley called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Citizen Service Awards

District 1 Commissioner Lamarcus Davis presented the Citizen Service Award to Malik Herring Foundation.

District 2 Commissioner Eddie Rowland presented the Citizen Service Award to Jill Lancaster.

Chairman Tapley presented the Citizen Service Award to J.D. Chapman.

District 3 Commissioner John Ambrose and District 4 Commissioner George Emami tabled their award presentations until the next meeting.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval adding executive session for personnel.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-December 5, 2024, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2023, regular meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

County Clerk Appointment

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the Monroe County enabling legislation requires the annual appointment of a County Clerk. The current County Clerk, Janet Abbott, is a 16 plus year employee and is a Certified County Clerk by the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Additionally, Mrs. Abbott is a Certified Human Resources Manager by the University of Georgia Association of County Commissioners of Georgia.

Mr. Hedges stated Mrs. Abbott is an outstanding County Clerk/Human Resources Manager and I highly recommend her reappointment as the Monroe County Clerk.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Janet Abbott as County Clerk.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

P & Z Board Appointment

County Manager Jim Hedges stated there are five appointees to the Monroe County Planning and Zoning Board, one appointee by each Commissioner for a one-year term. Current appointees are as follows:

- Jim Rollins-Chairman's appointee
- David Hunter-District 1
- Chuck Benson-District 2
- Richard Ezelle-District 3

- Chad Tyler-District 4

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint the existing board members.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Hospital Authority Appointments

The Hospital Authority-Monroe County will have two vacancies beginning January 1, 2024, Mr. Mac Brown was appointed to the Board on May 16, 2023, to fulfill the unexpired term of Phillip English whose term will expire on December 31, 2023. Mr. Larry Burney, who was reappointed to the Board on October 3, 2023, for a five-year term has submitted his resignation effective December 31, 2023.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Mac Brown and to appoint Janet Freeman to the Hospital Authority for five-year terms.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Monroe County Board of Health

The one expiring appointment to the Monroe County Board of Health is for the Chairman, Dr. Jeremy Goodwin whose term expires on December 31, 2023. This is a six-year term.

Chairman Tapley motioned to reappoint Jeremy Goodwin for a six-year term to the Monroe County Board of Health.

DFCS Appointments

Monroe County has two appointees to the Board of Family & Children Services that will expire on December 31, 2023. Those appointees are Ms. Lisa Davis, and Mr. Georgia Evans. Ms. Sametrice Adams-Carter, Director of DFCS recommends both individuals be reappointed to a second five-year term.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Lisa Davis and Georgia Evans for a second five-year term to the Board of Family and Children Services.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Library Board of Monroe County

There are thirteen appointees to the Library Board of Monroe County, eleven members are appointed by the Monroe County Board of Commissioners, one appointed by the Monroe County Board of Education, and one appointed by the City of Forsyth. Two appointees' terms expire on December 31, 2023, as follows:

- Jane Pennington
- Jennie Caldwell

The Chairperson of the Library Board of Monroe County, Ms. Taylor Bittick, has recommended the appointment of Joan Whitehead Freeman (retired Monroe County educator), and Joe Reed. Both are very

involved with the library and Ms. Bittick believes both are willing to serve. The appointments to this board are four-year appointments.

Following a Board discussion regarding the reasoning for a 13-member board, the Board agreed by general consensus to table until the next meeting for more information.

Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce

Monroe County's appointed representative to the Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce is Chairman Greg Tapley. His term expires on December 31, 2023, and reappointment is required.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Greg Tapley to the Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

MATS Community Advisory Committee

The MATS (Macon Area Transportation Study) Community Advisory Committee has one member from Monroe County. The appointment is for two years and currently held by John Ricketson who has been on the committee for six years and is ineligible to continue due to term limitations.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to appoint Kim Stokes to the Macon Area Transportation Study Community Advisory Committee for a two-year term.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Region V-EMS Council Appointment

Monroe County has two appointees to the Region V-EMS Council: Matt Jackson and Jessie Suggs. Chief Jackson's term expired on September 15, 2023, and reappointment is recommended. This is for a three-year term.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Chief Matt Jackson to the Region V-EMS Council for a three-year term.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion was passed 5-0.

Region 2-DBHHD Appointment

Monroe County has two appointees to the Region 2 DBHHD, Debbie Harbin and Greg Tapley. Chairman Tapley's term expires on December 31, 2023. The appointment is for a three-year term.

Commissioner Emami motioned to reappoint Greg Tapley for a three-year term.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

River Edge Behavioral Health Community Service Board

Monroe County has two appointees to the River Edge Behavioral Health Community Service Board: Dr. Priscilla Doster, and Ms. Carolann Evans. Their term for Ms. Doster will expire on December 31, 2023. This is a three-year appointment.

Chairman Tapley stated he had asked them to submit a recommendation, but none had been received.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to table to allow for recommendations.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Two Rivers RC&D Council

Monroe County has two appointees to the Two Rivers RC&D Council. Historically, Monroe County has appointed the Chairman and Road Superintendent to this Council, each serving a one-year term. Current appointees from Monroe County are Chairman Greg Tapley, and former employee Chris Walker.

The recommendation is to reappoint Chairman Tapley, and the replacement for Chris Walker would be Kim Stokes.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reappoint Chairman Tapley and to appoint Kim Stokes to the Two Rivers RC&D for a one-year term.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Meeting Organization and Public Access to Meetings

Back in 2019, the Board of Commissioners on more than one occasion discussed adopting an ordinance addressing meeting organization and public access to meetings. Those discussions resulted in several proposed amendments that were noted; however, the amended ordinance was never brought back before the Board of Commissioners for adoption.

Attorney Ben Vaughn has resurrected the ordinance and amended to include the proposed amendments. This is being brought back to the Board of Commissioners in light of recent Speaker Appearances by individuals conducting First Amendment Audits of various governments. Some of those appearances included failure by the speaker to provide name and addresses, comments addressed to the audience instead of the Chair, personal attacks and derogatory or inappropriate remarks, and slanderous remarks. Adoption of this ordinance is recommended.

Commissioner Ambrose stated the proposed ordinance does not allow for action to be taken during commissioner comments and he would like for this to be changed to allow for voting if necessary.

Following a Board discussion, County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated he would make the change and bring it back at a later meeting for the Board to review.

Vertical Bridge Contract Amendment

The Board approved upgrading the E-911 cell tower backbone following damage resulting from lightning in July. The upgrade included an additional microwave antenna on the Cabiness cell tower. As a result of adding additional equipment to this cell tower, the owner, Vertical Bridge (VB-S1 Assets, LLC) is requesting an amendment to the contract by increasing the monthly rent by \$1,500.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he doesn't think the county should approve any additional towers unless the County is allowed to co-locate without being charged.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Vertical Bridge Contract amendment increasing the monthly rent by \$1500.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

IGA-Inmate Housing

The Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Forsyth to house, board, and incarcerate prisoners, arrestees, and detainees of the City of Forsyth expired on December 31, 2019. At the request of the Sheriff, he proposes the daily housing and boarding rate be increased from \$40 to \$50 per day; and the booking and processing rate be increased from \$15 to \$30. One additional recommendation is that the new IGA will not exclude prisoners, arrestees or detainees charged with violations of State or County Ordinances who are arrested by the city, unless the city provides charging documentation, i.e., warrants.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the IGA-Inmate Housing Agreement.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

2024 Qualifying Fees

By law, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners establishes the qualifying fees for candidates seeking county offices, and for the Board of Education. Qualifying fees are 3% of base pay.

The calculated qualifying fees for County Offices for the 2024 elections are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| • Board of Commissioner-Chairman | \$465.00 |
| • Board of Commissioners-Commissioner | \$450.00 |
| • Clerk of Superior Court | \$1,778.88 |
| • Sheriff | \$2,550.00 |
| • Tax Commissioner | \$1,778.88 |
| • Coroner | \$535.56 |
| • Chief Magistrate | \$1,798.04 |
| • Probate Judge | \$1,778.88 |

The calculated qualifying fees for the Board of Education for the 2024 elections are as follows:

- Board of Education-Member \$60.75

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the qualifying fees for County Offices for the 2024 elections as presented.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the qualifying fees for the Board of Education for the 2024 elections as presented.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

P & Z Hearing-Dames Ferry Road-Special Use/Variance

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to open a public hearing at for all three Special Use/Variance Applications being presented at 6:43 p.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Special Use/Variance Application-Campground/Recreational Vehicle Park located at 1655 Dames Ferry, Forsyth, Ga 31029. Map 078 Parcel 043A. Keith Morey, Land Kare Management, LLC is the applicant and property owner.

Mrs. Fortner stated a special use is being requested to bring the current campground/recreational vehicle park into the correct zoning district. A variance is requested due to being a couple acres shy of the 25-acre minimum for a campground/recreational vehicle park.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Planning & Zoning Board recommended approval with the condition of having the owner/operator submit Environmental Health compliance yearly.

P & Z Hearing-High Falls Road-Special Use/Variance

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Special Use/Variance Application-Campground/Recreational Vehicle Park located at 4882 High Falls Road, Jackson Georgia, Map 013a Parcel 002. Kevin St. Laurent is the applicant and property owner.

Mrs. Fortner stated a special use is being requested to bring the current campground/recreational vehicle park into the correct zoning district. A variance is requested for less than the 25-acre minimum for a campground/recreational vehicle park.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval with the condition of having the owner/operator submit Environmental Health compliance yearly.

P & Z Hearing-Buck Creek Road-Special Use/Variance

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Special Use/Variance Application-Campground/Recreational Vehicle Park located at 162 Buck Creek Road, Jackson, Georgia, Map 013 Parcel 035. Kevin St. Laurent is the applicant and property owner.

Mrs. Fortner stated a special use is being requested to bring the current campground/recreational vehicle park into the correct zoning district. A variance is requested for less than the 25-acre minimum for a campground/recreational vehicle park.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval with the condition of having the owner/operator submit Environmental Health compliance yearly.

No one was present in opposition to the applications.

Commissioner Ambrose asked what is involved in the Environmental Health letter and shouldn't that be handled by Gina Davis.

Ms. Fortner replied it is handled by Environmental Health and it states they are connected properly or being dumped properly.

Commissioner Ambrose stated two of the campgrounds are pretty small, but they are existing RV camps trying to come under the new ordinance, how many more spots can they increase.

Ms. Fortner stated Mr. Morey is the only one that could expand; the other two do not have room to.

Commissioner Ambrose asked was there any type of restriction to stop them from compressing the lots and expanding.

Ms. Fortner stated Environmental Health would not allow that, but the Board could put a restriction on the application.

Commissioner Emami stated he had a conversation with Gina Smith, and she was not aware of the restriction that the county had imposed stating the RV's had to be set up as if they are individual housing. He stated he had requested some information from Ms. Smith but due to the holidays he had not heard back from her. He stated the issue is the state treats them differently based on them being RV's. The reason they do this is throughout most of the state they are treated as transient living. He stated from the beginning of this it was agreed that these be treated as permanent housing. He asked Ms. Fortner if she had documentation that each of these properties had been permitted as if they were individual houses.

Ms. Fortner stated the three properties presented had applied years ago prior to the UDO and she has their documentation.

Commissioner Emami asked Ms. Fortner if she had documentation in her files that each of the units in these locations were actual houses for permanent use.

Ms. Fortner stated she doesn't know if it says they are actual houses.

Commissioner Emami stated he understands Ms. Smith has a state mandate but locally the law had changed, and he is afraid they have not been permitted that way.

Commissioner Emami asked Ms. Fortner to see the permits she has on file from Environmental Health.

Ms. Fortner replied she has their permits, but they were not recent permits, they were from prior.

Commissioner Ambrose stated for an RV park he doesn't think it would be right to have an individual septic tank for each RV.

Commissioner Emami stated he needed to see the documentation before he voted that each property was permitted for the septic tanks properly.

Commissioner Ambrose stated we are calling these RV parks, but he thinks RV parks and mobile home parks should be the same.

Commissioner Rowland asked Mr. Morey how his septic system worked.

Mr. Morey replied that currently he has five tanks, all state inspected, and all state installed. He stated he pumps them once a year. He stated it is a three-screen system to protect the environment. Each one of the systems gets maintained and looked at three times a year because the health department inspects them three times a year. He stated he is already doing what is being asked.

Commissioner Emami stated there are two separate places in the book to look at, one if you have permanent residency and one if you are an RV park. When Gina is going by the book, she is going by assumptions that you are an RV park and not allowing permanent residency. Permanent residency is defined as staying over 30 days and everyone seems to be wanting to allow permanent residency.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he doesn't think the Board of Commissioners should be enforcing Health Department rules.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated he can't differentiate between permanent and temporary residence, but Commissioner Emami is correct in the way he is applying the code.

Commissioner Ambrose stated we can differentiate between permanent and temporary because each pad has to meet state specifications.

Ms. Fortner stated in October permanent residency was changed to 14 days.

Mr. Morey stated the permanent and temporary portion is confusing because he has traveling nurses and construction workers that stay for 6 months, they are temporary not permanent, but the Board is defining them as permanent. He stated he does not want permanent.

Commissioner Emami stated he doesn't mind the permanent as long as it meets the standard, but part of the problem is the breakdown between county and state government. He stated with these first three we have to

make sure we get these right because whatever is approved with these, we have to be prepared to approve for other applicants that are qualified.

Commissioner Rowland stated the point of whether they are temporary or permanent is different than whether they are safe. He stated he thinks that is beyond the scope of the five board commissioners to decide if the septic system is safe. The state is going to have to make that call and if the state health department decides it is safe then that's good enough for him. He continued stating regarding whether they are temporary or permanent, if somebody moves in and out every fourteen days you are going to have the same amount of waste as if someone is living there permanently so he doesn't see a lot of difference there. He stated ultimately the board is trying to decide on something they may have the authority to do but he doesn't think they have the know how to do it.

Chairman Tapley stated he agrees with Commissioner Rowland.

Commissioner Davis stated what he is hearing is it has already been inspected and someone has already determined what needed to be installed.

Commissioner Emami stated he voted to approve that each RV be permitted as a permanent residence, he continued he would not have voted for anything else.

Ms. Fortner stated she doesn't think any septic permit letter she has ever gotten states this is permanent, or this is for a campground. Ms. Fortner stated she would communicate with Gina that the permits need to state permanent or temporary.

Following an extensive Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 7:21 p.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Dames Ferry as is.

Chairman Tapley seconded for discussion.

Commissioner Emami asked that the vote be tabled.

Commissioner Ambrose amended his motion to approve Dames Ferry RV Park application as is, contingent on a letter from the health department stating they are compliant with Section 4.02.02A1 of the Monroe County UDO.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion was passed 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motion to approve Red Oak RV Park application contingent on a letter from the health department stating they are compliant with Section 4.02.02A1 of the Monroe County UDO and for no additional spots to be added.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motion to approve High Falls RV Park application contingent on a letter from the health department stating they are compliant with Section 4.02.02A1 of the Monroe County UDO and for no additional spots to be added.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis thanked everyone in attendance.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he had no additional comments.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he feels as though if something originates at someone's house it should be allowed at the recycle centers. He stated residential trash should be accepted and would like it brought up at the next meeting.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated a week doesn't go by that he isn't amazed at the people that live in the county that have very big hearts and they continue to rise up when the need arises. He stated he was blown away at the generosity during the heater drive recently held by the school system.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated in regard to the addition of action being taken during commissioner comments, one of the things he thinks is important is the board should have time to research properly. He stated he is not going to vote on something that he has not had time to research.

Public Comments

Timothy Carter, resident of 1011 Flint Road stated he submitted a petition in December for speed limits and was told it would be on this agenda.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the first meeting of the year is an organizational meeting and it would be added to a later agenda.

Chairman Tapley stated he apologizes Mr. Carter was there for the whole meeting but it is being worked on.

Greg Head resident of Rocky Creek Road stated it sounded like the board had made different rules for each RV park and it should be equal rules for all. Mr. Head stated he thinks the whole UDO should be scrapped and the old zoning ordinance should be gone through one by one. He stated Kelsey Fortner has done a great job and she has been run through the meat grinder in his opinion and he appreciates her when he comes in and gets permits.

He stated he had three people come to him in the past week complaining about not being able to take stuff from their homes to the recycle centers.

Executive Session

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session at 7:42 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 8:06 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Action from Executive Session-

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated a personnel item was discussed during executive session and no action was taken.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 7:08 p.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk