

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the January 16, 2024

Work Session

8:00 A.M. Workshop

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Eddie Rowland, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Workshop

New Business

Call to Order

Chairman Tapley called the work session to order at 8:00 A.M.

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the work session agenda for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda.

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

Septic System/RV's

County Manager Jim Hedges stated following the Board of Commissioners' meeting on January 2, 2024, there have been a number of emails between all parties relating to septic tanks at RV parks. Gina Smith, Monroe County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Manager, has requested to address the board.

Commissioner Rowland asked Ms. Smith what is required of a septic system and considered safe by the state if I want to build a home and what is required to build a septic system for an RV Park and how are they different?

Ms. Smith replied 1000-gallon tanks are required for 1–4-bedroom homes and 5 or more bedrooms require an additional 500 gallons. She stated the minimum amount of drain lines required for a one-to-four-bedroom home is 100 feet of chamber or 150 feet of gravel. Ms. Smith stated the average length is about 400 feet of chamber for a four-bedroom home in Monroe County.

Ms. Smith stated RV parks are sized differently because they are sized based on 150 gallons per day because RVs don't typically have washers.

Commissioner Emami stated he disagrees with the state requirement for RV parks because although they don't typically use a washing machine in the RV, they will likely use an onsite laundry facility which still creates septic usage.

Commissioner Emami stated the tiny home community he owns requires 1000-gallon septic tank and 150 feet of drain line for each home. He stated he is concerned that there is clearly a very different standard for an RV park than for what the state requires from every other property type.

Ms. Smith responded that state rules don't specify RV park residents as permanent or temporary, the septic system requirements apply to all RVs.

Commissioner Emami stated it is important that Monroe County not set a bad precedent by granting premature approval for RV parks without understanding possible ramifications.

Commissioner Rowland stated Ms. Smith has the knowledge and experience to impose and adhere to state requirements for septic systems.

Following an extensive Board discussion regarding septic system requirements for RVs versus residential properties, Commissioner Emami asked Ms. Smith if the states requirements for the size of an RV park septic system are adequate for safe waste disposal in Monroe County.

Ms. Smith replied she believes the states septic system requirements are appropriate for RV parks.

Commissioner Emami stated he was satisfied following the state's requirements.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the work session at 8:56 A.M.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was approved 5-0.

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the January 16, 2024

Regular Commissioners Meeting

9:00 A.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

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Chaplain Rodney Callahan 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 9:00 A.M.

Citizen Service Awards

District 3 Commissioner John Ambrose presented the Citizen Service Award to Kim Stokes.

District 2 Commissioner George Emami presented the Citizen Service Award to Robert Muckenfuss.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with the removal of item E for more clarification.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting- January 2, 2024, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes of the January 2, 2024, regular meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

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

Flint Road Speed Limit

County Manager Jim Hedges stated residents on Flint Road have submitted a petition to reduce the speed limit on a portion of Flint Road due to a dangerous curve. O.C.G.A. 40-6-183 gives the governing authority the authority to reduce the speed limit in certain areas. The Monroe County Road Superintendent in his professional judgment recommends a reduction and the installation of dangerous curve signage.

Mr. Hedges stated the recommendation is to reduce the speed limit from 40 mph to 25 mph on Flint Road, instruct Public Works to install new speed limit signs and dangerous curve signs and to notify the Monroe County Sheriff and the Ga DOT of the speed limit changes.

Stephen Turner, resident of 811 Flint Road and retired Bibb County deputy, stated there are nine curves on the road. He stated a heavy equipment mechanic lives on Flint Road and when the big trucks are coming you literally must drive off the road to pass them. He stated several families walk along Flint Road and it is dangerous.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to reduce the speed limit from 40 mph to 25 mph on Flint Road, instruct Public Works to install new speed limit signs and dangerous curve signs and to notify the Monroe County Sheriff and the Ga DOT of the speed limit changes.

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

Procurement Policy Amendment

Finance Director Lorri Robinson presented a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to amend the Monroe County Purchasing Policy. Ms. Robinson stated the recommendations are as follows:

- Increasing the dollar amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for approved budgeted items. Ms. Robinson stated these items also require an RFQ.
- Invitations to Bid-Competitive bidding should be encouraged to solicit bids from qualified businesses who can provide the item or service required. The amendment includes adding all invitations to bid to be posted to the Georgia Department of Administrative Services Procurement Registry. The Georgia Procurement Registry works in conjunction with Team Georgia Marketplace with whom vendors have registered their business to receive bids with their respective NIGP codes.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he is fine with raising the dollar amount, but he is totally against requiring bids to be placed on the Georgia Procurement Registry because it restricts local vendors.

Chairman Tapley stated he agrees with Commissioner Ambrose and thinks it should remain only bids above \$100,000 are to be placed on the registry.

Following a Board discussion Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve increasing the dollar amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for budgeted items and leave the procurement registry amount at \$100,000.

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

Meeting Organization and Public Access to Meetings

This item was removed from the agenda.

Library Board Appointments

County Manager Jim Hedges stated at the January 2, 2024, Board of Commissioners' meeting, the reappointment of two Library Board members was tabled pending a review relating to the number of Library Board members. There are 11 Board members, 9 appointed by the Board of Commissioners, 1 appointed by the Board of Education, and 1 appointed by the City of Forsyth. Georgia law, O.C.G.A. 20-5-42 requires a governmental agency to financially support the library on a regular basis; however, neither the BOE nor the City of Forsyth financially support the Monroe County Library which brings into question should those appointees even be on the Library Board.

Chairman Tapley addressed the County Attorney stating if no one gets appointed right now until things get worked out, currently there are 9 members on an 11-member board, he asked what is considered a quorum for this board.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated it is expressed in the bylaws that six-members constitute a quorum.

Chairman Tapley stated if the Board of Commissioners doesn't appoint someone, we are limiting their ability to act.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Davis motioned to appoint Joan Whitehead Freeman and Barbara Dye to the Library Board.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Tapley stated there is more discussion that needs to be had before any appointments are made but the way forward right now is to have a discussion with the Library Board regarding the member appointments.

River Edge Behavioral Health Community Service Board

The reappointment of Dr. Priscilla Doster to the River Edge Behavioral Health Community Service Board was tabled at the January 2, 2024, Board of Commissioners meeting to enable Chairman Tapley an opportunity to speak to Dr. Doster regarding being reappointed. Chairman Tapley has communicated with Dr. Doster, and she has indicated she would accept being reappointed to this board.

Commissioner Davis motioned to reappoint Priscilla Doster to the River Edge Behavioral Health Community Service Board.

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

Lead Inventory Grant Documentation

Tammy Selman, Grant Specialist, addressed the Board stating Monroe County has been awarded a \$90,000 grant through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority to complete a water line inventory throughout the county. This includes service and customer lines. Ms. Selman stated this is a housekeeping item to authorize the Chairman to sign the required documents associated with this grant.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the Chairman to sign the required documents.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion was approved 5-0.

ARPA-Towaliga Judicial Circuit Grant Acknowledgement

Tammy Selman, Grant Specialist, addressed the Board stating The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided a grant for the Towaliga Judicial Circuit beginning in 2022 and continuing through 2024. We have been asked to minute the acknowledgement of this grant in the Board of Commissioners' meeting minutes.

Ms. Selman stated the following regarding the ARPA funds:

- Grant funds received through Judicial Council of Georgia
- Funds have been used to pay salaries for Assistant District Attorneys (3), Court Reporter, Bailiffs, and Grant Specialist.
- It is anticipated this will be the last year for grant funding.
- Grant funds awarded:
 - 2022 - \$627,399.00
 - 2023 - \$643,998.00
 - 2024 - \$249,594.00 + \$112,830.00 in estimated rollover from 2023 funds = \$362,424.00

Commissioner Davis motioned to acknowledge receipt of the ARPA-Towaliga Judicial Circuit Grant.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion was approved 5-0.

Public Comments

John Ricketson, resident of 120 Carriage Drive in Riverside Plantation, addressed the Board stating he sent an email with photos typical of what he sees at the Bolingbroke Recycle Center. He stated the bulk waste container is overflowing with cardboard. He suggested the Board make cardboard recycling mandatory.

Bronwen Morgan, resident of 159 Towaliga Lake Drive, addressed the Board stating she is concerned the Meeting Organization and Public Access policy that is being proposed will restrict the public's access to the podium. She stated there are two areas in the document that directly affect the public, the agenda section, and the public participation.

Percy Freeman stated he owns property in Juliette on Hilltop Street and McCrackin Street, but he now lives on Todd Creek Place. He stated when he purchased the property on Hilltop Street, McCrackin Street was paved. Hilltop Street was not paved, there are five residents that live on Hilltop Street and a business. He stated he wrote a letter to then Commissioner Bilderback asking why the road was not paved and it was then paved sometime later. He stated when the water lines were being run, the county neglected to run the lines on Hilltop Street. He stated he sent emails and eventually it was fixed but now he has realized there are no fire hydrants. He stated he asked the installers why no hydrants were installed, and he was told the lines are too small for a hydrant and the law states it must be at least 1000 feet. He asked the Board what they are going to do about it. He stated there are two hydrants within 50 feet of each other in front of the fire station but none where the houses are.

Chairman Tapley stated Commissioner Ambrose needed to be able to look into the issue and would get back to Mr. Freeman.

Tammy Selman, Grant Specialist, stated she had just recently submitted a grant for two new compactors, and she had met with Public Works Director Kim Stokes, regarding priorities for recycling and the landfill.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he prays the Board will keep an open mind and heart and work for everyone in the community and not let certain individuals sway us.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he feels the Board is listening to the community. He stated he feels like he is on duty 24/7 and he listens. He continued to state you can call any of the Board members whether it's their district or not and they are going to try to help you.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he agrees with Commissioner Rowland, the citizens can call any of the Board members no matter what district. He stated there is supposed to be cold weather the next morning and everyone needs to protect their pipes and watch out for their neighbors and pets.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated any time the county has four inches of rain, he asks that the community give us a little bit of a break. He stated any time you have torrential rains, you are going to have little mini rivers running through your yard and most of the time it has nothing to do with the county, it was just a lot of rain but if there are issues, we are working on it.

Commissioner Emami stated regarding the library debate, several thoughts come to mind. The most important thing we are missing sometimes is just people being reasonable. People need to approach the problem with an idea and desire to work things out. He stated the days are gone when any one person or group can mandate how things are done. He stated he has listened to both sides, and he was alarmed that some of the books were accessible to a toddler, but he does not want to restrict the content in our library. He asked if he tells someone they can't read certain content will he be told tomorrow that he can't read the bible? He stated he wants to know that his right to read the bible is not going to be in jeopardy and restricting this content can possibly restrict his rights in the future. He stated we need people in the community to raise difficult conversations but where we as a public are failing is treating each other with respect. He stated it is not appropriate to disrespect the people serving on the library board that are giving their time.

Commissioner Emami stated we lost a very important person in our community, Mr. Billy Powell.

Commissioner Emami stated Mr. Powell's service and efforts he gave to our community are not to go unnoticed. He stated he would like to take a moment to posthumously thank him for the things he did for the community.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated Boyd Elrod, IT Director, is doing research for a grant project and is looking for an inhabited parcel of property that has zero access to the internet. If anyone knows of a parcel, please let him or Boyd Elrod know.

Chairman Tapley stated he would like to commend EMS Chief Matt Jackson for being named EMS Director of the year.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session

There was no executive session, therefore no action.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 10:25 A.M.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk