

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the June 21, 2022

Regular Commissioners Meeting

9:00 A.M. Meeting

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman-Not Present

Lamarcus Davis, Vice Chairman

Eddie Rowland, District 2

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Lorri Robinson, Finance Director

Welcome

Vice Chairman Davis welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Rowland led the invocation.

Pledge

Vice Chairman Davis led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Deputy Coroner Retirement

Coroner Joey Proctor presented a retirement plaque to Rufus Adams commemorating him for 26 years as Deputy Coroner with Monroe County. Mr. Proctor stated Mr. Adams was the first deputy coroner he hired upon taking the office of coroners.

The Board thanked Mr. Adams for his service to the county.

Mr. Adams stated he would like to thank the county for the opportunity to serve the citizens for 26 years.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with addition of item J (Commissioner Emami), item K (School Resource Officer), Item L (John Ambrose) and Executive Session for Personnel, Litigation, and Real Estate.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-June 7, 2022

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes of the June 7, 2022, Regular meeting with the usual 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Impact Fees-Capital Improvement Element

Bill Ross presented a resolution for approval adopting a Capital Improvement Element (CIE) as part of the County's Comprehensive plan. Mr. Ross stated the data is prepared for the Impact Fee Program and enlightens the CIE. Population, housing, and employment forecasts have been prepared specifically for use in the Impact Fee Study. This CIE will be submitted for Middle Georgia Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Community Affairs review and adopted, following the procedures for adoption of a Comprehensive Plan amendment.

Vice Chairman Davis read the resolution into the minutes.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the resolution.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Motorola VESTA 9-1-1 Upgrade

Billy Smith, Southeast Rep for Motorola, addressed the Board stating that the basics of the E-911 communication system has the incoming telephone system on one end and radio dispatching on the other end with lots of components in between. The telephone side utilizes Vesta hardware and software which was installed in 2008-2009 and operates on Windows 7 which is no longer supported by Microsoft. The last update

was in 2016. The new VESTA 9-1-1 hardware and software is the latest upgrade and is compatible with the Next Generation 911.

Because most 911 systems were originally built using analog rather than digital technologies, public safety answering points (PSAPs) across the country need to be upgraded to a digital or Internet Protocol (IP)-based 911 system commonly referred to as Next Generation 911.

The success and reliability of 911 will be greatly improved with the implementation of NG911, as it will enhance emergency number services to create a faster, more resilient system that allows voice, photos, videos, and text messages to flow seamlessly from the public to the 911 network. NG911 will also improve PSAP ability to help manage call overload, natural disasters, and transferring of 911 calls and proper jurisdictional responses based on location tracking.

The total cost is \$806,993.00. No action is needed today.

The Board discussed in depth the needed upgrades.

The Board instructed County Attorney Ben Vaughn to look into Williams Communication to determine if they were negligent in updating the County's E-911 System.

Strickland Loop Landfill Change Orders

Steve Harbin, Harbin Engineering, presented a request for a change order in the amount of \$172,769 from the Atlantis Commercial Group, contractor for the construction of the Phase 2 Landfill Cell Construction project. Increases were specifically for the extra cost associated with the solid rock excavation and the addition of a fuel surcharge given the price increase for diesel fuel.

The Board previously instructed Mr. Reynolds to negotiate a 50% reduction in the request for a cost increase.

Mr. Harbin stated Mr. Reynolds has been unsuccessful in negotiating a price reduction.

Mr. Harbin stated with this change order the total expenditures will be \$4,070,291.00. This will bring the project \$365,310 over budget.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the change order.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion passed 4-0.

Commissioner Emami and Commissioner Rowland stated they were voting yes reluctantly.

Road Superintendent Jr. Watts gave an update on the EPD requirement of dredging the sediment pond at the landfill utilizing Public Works employees. Mr. Watts stated the project is going faster than anticipated and is expected to be finished at least 5 days sooner and will be an estimated \$100,000 savings to the county.

Staffing Request-Tax Commissioner

Tax Commissioner Lori Andrews addressed the Board requesting an additional staff member. Ms. Andrews stated the traffic and workload has picked up significantly in the Tax Commissioners Office and presented

several documents outlining the workload for her office. Ms. Andrews stated an additional staff member is needed to help with the increasing workload.

The Board asked Ms. Andrews to wait and add this to the Tax Commissioner's 2023 budget which the Board would consider at that time.

No action was taken.

2021 Budget Amendment

Finance Director Lorri Robinson presented the Final 2021 Budget Amendments. Annually the County is required to adjust the budget to actual. Ms. Robinson stated the final amendments will bring the final budget for fiscal year 2021 to \$39,385, 325.

The final budget amendments included:

- \$5.4 million fire truck lease purchase, which is recorded as other financing sources under revenues and listed as an expenditure in the fire department budget.
- \$405,984 in revenues from building permit fees, which is listed as an expenditure under contractual services to the county's building department.
- \$604,844 in LMIG funds that are to be transferred into the SPLOST category for road repairs.

Ms. Robinson stated the county collected \$46,197,004 in revenues in 2021 of which \$31,124,388 came from taxes. Ms. Robinson stated general fund revenues have increased from about \$30.5 million in 2018 to about \$46.1 million in 2021. General fund expenses have also risen from about \$27.1 million in 2018 to about \$39.4 million in 2021.

Ms. Robinson stated the county had about \$6.8 million in available fund balance at the end of 2021. She said about \$2.9 million has uses that have been assigned; about \$2.4 million have unrestricted uses. The remaining \$1.5 million would be kept in fund balance for emergency purposes in the future.

Following an extensive Board discussion, Commissioner Rowland motioned to approve the final budget amendments.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Towaliga Judicial Circuit Budget

After several reiterations of the Towaliga Judicial Circuit Budget by Lamar, Butts, and Monroe County, the final agreed upon budget for 2022/2023 is \$2,216,849, that includes budges for the Judges, District Attorney, Juvenile Judges, Juvenile Counsel, Public Defender, Drug Court, Veterans' Court, and Mental Health Court. Monroe County's share of the circuit's budget decreases from 41% to 39%. However, Monroe County's share of expenses increases from \$820,037 to \$850,464; an increase of \$30,427.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Towaliga Judicial Budget as presented.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Landfill CAT D6 Rebuild

The Caterpillar D6 bulldozer at the landfill according to Landfill Manager, Frank Newton, has lost virtually all power and is no longer capable of climbing the landfill slopes. This machine was purchased new in 1999 and underwent a powertrain rebuild, engine and transmission, 2011/2012. Two options have been evaluated, first a total rebuild at a cost of \$268,022 that will take 6 to 9 weeks depending on the availability of parts, or secondly, the purchase of a new machine at a cost of \$524,899.

We also looked for used bulldozers on the market and found several as shown below:

- 2015, 5954 hours, located in Canada-\$386,700
- 2015, 4272 hours, located in Georgia-\$349,800
- 2016, unknown hours, located in Georgia-\$289,900
- 2017, 7882 hours, located in Kansas-\$265,000
- 2020, unknown hours, located in Texas-\$425,000
- 2020, 1536 hours, located in Canada-\$666,700

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the recommendation is to rebuild the existing machine at a cost of \$268,022 with funding from either a reallocation of funds which would require a budget amendment, or from contingency.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the total rebuild.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Emami-Curb Spending

Commissioner Emami stated he sent an email to County Manager Jim Hedges requesting to volunteer to help identify wasteful spending within the county. Commissioner Emami said Mr. Hedges suggested bringing the request before the full Board.

Commissioner Rowland stated he agrees with Commissioner Emami that Monroe County needs to evaluate creative ways to save money and he would like for each department to be evaluated.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he doesn't think Commissioners are qualified to make those evaluations themselves and suggested hiring an outside consulting firm to do the work. Commissioner Ambrose continued to state the County Manager only makes spending proposals to Commissioners and said the Board has the ultimate decision on how to spend county funds.

Commissioner Rowland asked the Board for several weeks for him to work alongside Commissioner Davis to determine a procedure for moving forward with departmental spending evaluations.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would be fine with that as long the county department heads were involved in the process.

Mr. Hedges stated Commissioners could assist in making these types of spending cuts by doing simple things like reviewing the county's agenda online rather than having copies printed and by booking their own reservations rather than utilizing a county employee.

Following an extensive Board discussion, the Board agreed to wait until Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Davis came up with a plan before a decision would be made.

School Resource Officer request

The Monroe County Board of Education has approved the addition of a 6th School Resource Officer. The agreement with the BOE is that the BOE will cover 80% of salary and benefits and provide the SRO a vehicle, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners will absorb 20% of the salary and benefits for each SRO.

MCBOC's share for per SRO based on average salary and benefit is \$12,400 annually. The cost for MCBOC for the remainder of 2022 will be \$6,200 and this can be absorbed within the Sheriff's budget.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the request as presented.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Ambrose-River Edge Community Service Board

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to appoint Carolann Evans to a three-year term on the River Edge Community Service Board to replace Rosalind McMillan, whose term is set to expire on July 31, 2022.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and them motion carried 4-0.

Old Business

There was no old business discussed.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Ambrose expressed his displeasure with Commissioner Emami's public comment regarding County Manager Jim Hedges. He stated it should have been handled in executive session. Commissioner Ambrose stated he has had phone calls from County Department Heads that were scared to death. He continued to state the County Manager can't make spending decisions he only makes recommendations. Commissioner Ambrose stated he thinks the Board should take a vote of confidence for the County Manager.

Commissioner Rowland stated each one of us have about 7000 stockholders that we represent. He continued when your stockholders give you direction you do it. We as commissioners must do things, we don't agree with, but we must do them.

Commissioner Emami stated he felt strongly enough about the rising expenditures that he felt like he needed to make a public statement. He stated he does not envy the job Mr. Hedges has. He stated he has a difficult job

trying to please five different bosses. He continued to state he doesn't know if there is a dollar amount that he would do it for and he has nothing personal against Mr. Hedges.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he thinks it is time to start allowing public comments on the County's Facebook page.

Following a discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to allow commenting on social media by the public.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments

Bar None Road resident, Alan Evans complemented the Board on keeping the county running smoothly.

County Road Superintendent Jr. Watts stated the county has gone through some hard times in the last 33 years and there were times we couldn't afford to buy adequate equipment. He stated since County Manager Jim Hedges became County Manager and began managing the county's finances, morale is higher than it's ever been at the road department.

Executive Session-Personnel, Litigation, and Real Estate

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session at 12:31 p.m. for personnel, litigation, and real estate.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

The Board agreed on a five-minute break.

Commissioner Davis left the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 1:13 p.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0.

Action from Executive Session

Following Executive Session, in the absence of Chairman Tapley and Vice Chairman Davis, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to make Commissioner Rowland the Chairman.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn gave an overview of what was discussed.

Mr. Vaughn stated there were two potential litigation matters, two land acquisition matters, one personnel matter, and one disposition of property matter discussed in executive session. Mr. Vaughn stated no action was taken on any of the items discussed.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned for a vote of confidence for the County Manager.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 1:16 P.M.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

County Clerk, Janet Abbott