

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the August 15, 2023

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:

Benjamin 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

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 9:00 A.M.

Extension Agent, Rachel Frisbee, updated the Board on current 4-H activities.

Commissioner Rowland asked Ms. Frisbee would a commercial kitchen be of use to the 4-H program.

Ms. Frisbee replied yes, it could be used for cooking clubs, 4-H programs, projects, and presentations and for cooking and canning classes.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with the addition of item K for an alcohol license and the addition of executive session for legal.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-August 1, 2023, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the minutes of the August 1, 2023, Regular meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

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

2023 Millage Rate

County Manager Jim Hedges presented the 2023 proposed mileage rate, the recommendation is to not increase property tax and to roll back the millage rate from 12.05 mils to 12.004 mils.

Highlights:

- The net digest value has decreased by \$137,318,604.
- The net tax for 2023 will decrease by \$1,725,815.
- The value of 1 mill will decrease from \$1,683,453 to \$1,546,135, a decrease of \$137,319.
- For 2022 and 2023, the net tax decrease is \$4,306,618.

Rollback

- The value of property tax associated with appraisals is \$71,122.
- To avoid a tax increase, it is recommended to rollback property tax from 12.05 mils to 12.004 mils.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to set the 2023 millage rate at 12.004 mils: a rollback of 0.0046 mils.

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

Conference Center Carpet Replacement

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the carpet at the Conference Center is approximately 18 years old and is separated in places and needs replacing. Advertisements for bids have been completed and a recommendation to the lowest bidder is being presented.

Following an extensive Board discussion, the board agreed by general consensus to table until the next meeting.

New Gymnasium/Horse Arena Relocation

County Manager Jim Hedges stated recently, the Board authorized the advertising for bids for a new gymnasium to be located at the Recreation Department Facilities. Preform LLC was the only bidder and was awarded a design/build contract. Preform has evaluated the site and developed a proposed double gymnasium; however, the preferred location would require the relocation of the existing horse arena.

Brief Background:

- Monroe County is lacking in gymnasiums.
- Recreation Department registration for basketball exceeds our available facilities.
- Commissioner Lamarcus Davis recommended we evaluate our options for constructing an additional gymnasium(s).
- Advertised, as required, and had one application: Proform Construction.
- Preliminary design, site location, and cost estimate have been received.

Locations Options:

- Location A-Existing outdoor basketball court.
 - Location is not best for a septic system.
 - Further distance from existing car parking.
 - Additional cost to reconstruct outdoor basketball courts.
- Location B-Existing horse arena
 - Better location for septic system
 - Adjacent to existing parking
 - Additional cost to move horse arena.
 - Preferred location.

Gymnasium Facilities:

- 2 regulation basketball courts
- 4 main basketball goals
- 8 side basketball goals
- Men/Women's Restrooms
- Small locker room
- Concession stand
- Room for bleachers (not included)
- Entrance hall for HOF memorabilia

- Additional parking

Gymnasium Cost:

- Master Plan-Harbin-2020 \$3,000,000
- Pro Form Construction-2023 \$2,548,600

Horse Arena Flashback:

- 2014 SPLOST Not included.
- Carter Engineering Design-pre-2017
- 2017 Comprehensive Plan Facilities included \$800,000
- 2018 Harbin Engineering Conceptual Plan
- 2018-2019 Citizen Survey Developed
- 2020 Harbin Master Plan Developed \$2,550,000
- 2020 SP Design Group Cost Estimate \$5,848,625
- 2020 SPLOST Not included.

Horse Arena Facility:

- Duplication of existing facility
- Relocation of existing bleachers
- Reuse existing fencing.
- New lighting
- Restrooms/concession stand
- Septic system

Horse Arena Usage:

Month/Year	Events	Participants
August 2022	3	275
September 2022	3	143
October 2022	3	409
November 2022	2	64
December 2022	2	110
January 2023	3	131
February 2023	4	157
March 2023	4	380
April 2023	4	106

May 2023	6	459
June 2023	4	231

Available Funds:

- **Funds Available** **\$10,600,260**
- **Approved Expenditures**
 - Bolingbroke Fire Station Buildout (\$199,571)
 - Animal Services Buildout (\$84,970)
 - High Falls Fire Station (\$1,139,388)
 - Records Storage Building (\$357,252)
 - Master Meters (\$151,179)
 - North to South Water (\$2,962,252)
 - Refrigerator/Incinerator (\$27,405)
 - E. Redding/High Top Road (\$168,109)
 - Smarr Fire Station (\$1,500,000)
 - Sheriff Training Facility (\$528,796)
 - **Remaining Funds** **\$3,481,338**

Cost Summary:

Gymnasium	Option 1	Option 2
Grading	\$35,000	\$35,000
Construction	\$2,450,000	\$2,450,000
Total Gymnasium	\$2,485,000	\$2,485,000
Optional		
Additional Parking & Sidewalks	\$90,000	\$90,000
Relocation of Horse Arena		
Clearing and Grading	\$105,000	-
Lighting	\$160,000	-
Septic	\$15,000	-
Restrooms/Concession	\$125,000	-
	\$405,000	-
Design Fee	\$115,600	\$115,600

Overhead & Profit	\$124,250	\$87,800
Total	\$3,129,850	\$2,688,400

Options:

- Proceed with the construction of the new gymnasium, and
- Proceed with the relocation of the horse arena, or
- Commissioner Eddie Rowland has an alternative plan for the horse arena.

Commissioner Rowland stated he is proposing to build the Monroe County Agricultural Center on approximately 20 acres of Recreation Park land purchased June 3, 2016, as part of a 114-acre tract. The proposed center would include offices for Monroe County 4-H Extension Service, stalls, a barn, a warmup area, restrooms, a concession stand, and parking. The proposed location will be at the corner of Highway 42 and Fairview Church Road.

Commissioner Rowland stated the citizens supported the 2014 SPLOST which had a significant amount proposed to build a new agricultural center or to renovate the existing rodeo ring.

Commissioner Rowland stated in 2019, several citizens and agricultural organizations brought to his attention the lack of follow through by the county on this project. Commissioner Rowland stated evidence could not be found within the wording of the SPLOST to specifically direct funds to the Ag center but enough evidence in newspaper articles supported the intentions.

Commissioner Rowland stated “while we had half the original 2.5 million for recreation still available for the center after spending the other half on other very necessary recreation department needs, we were disappointed that we didn’t have nearly enough to build something the county could use and be proud of. Recently, the need to build an additional gymnasium came up and while we certainly want to meet the needs of basketball and pickle ball along with other gym events, I felt it necessary and past due that we follow through on plans the county citizens agreed to over 10 years ago.”

Commissioner Rowland stated that unless Commissioners receive funding assistance from private industries or through federal or state grant support, they would likely have to dip into county reserves to pay for an ag center. Monroe County Grant Writer Tammy Selman stated there are potential grant options for the proposed center. Citizen Randy King stated he is concerned that no action will ever be taken on building the ag center. He also stated additional equipment is needed to maintain the horse arena.

Following an extensive Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to proceed with advertising for the construction of a new gymnasium and the relocation of the existing horse arena.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion for discussion.

Commissioner Emami stated he would like to include an additional \$35,000 in contingency to pay for engineering associated with the proposed ag center project.

Following additional discussion, Commissioner Ambrose amended his motion to include the advertisement of a RFQ for a site plan design for the proposed ag center and to include \$35,000 in contingency to pay for engineering.

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

Vehicle Lift Replacement

One of the three vehicle lifts at vehicle maintenance has failed and needs to be replaced. Three bids have been received as follows:

- NAPA \$14,870.61 plus \$1,400 installation
- O'Reilly \$14,911.50 plus \$1,400 installation
- Southern Equipment \$14,914.00 plus \$1,400 installation

The recommendation is to award NAPA for the purchase and installation plus their working with us on the old inventory so we can use some of these credits to offset the price.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the purchase of three vehicle lifts from NAPA for \$14,870.61 with the installation cost of \$1,400.

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

Animal Control Ordinance Amendment

Employees at Animal Control have requested authorization from the Board of Commissioners to be authorized to issue citations for violation under the Animal Control Ordinance-Chapter4- "Animals". Currently, only the Code Enforcement Officer, and the Monroe County Sheriff and his deputies are authorized under this ordinance to issue citations. Judge Buck Wilder has indicated to our Animal Services Director that in the past, Animal Control Officers did issue citations for violations of the Animal Control Ordinance and those violators came before his court.

Should the Board of Commissioners agree to this amendment, a policy on Citation Issuance would be created including a first-time citation warning, and violations that would warrant a citation.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve and to implement the amendment to the Animal Control Ordinance to allow Animal Control Officers to issue citations.

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

Roads and Bridge Ordinance Amendment

In the past, the Board of Commissioners have discussed the amendment of the Roads & Bridges Ordinance to provide a provision for the implementation of speed humps. Feedback was given to Attorney Ben Vaughn, and he is proposing an amendment to include the following highlights:

- Installation on streets classified as local two-way residential streets with a posted speed limit of 30 mph or less.
- Installation on level roads.
- Request via “informal” petition from an officer of an organized homeowner group.
- Traffic study to be performed by the county at the expense of the homeowners.
- Via “formal” petition, at least 70% of the property owners must affirm the installation of speed humps.
- Public Hearing to approve or disapprove the formal petition.
- Installation within six-months after receiving payment of all costs associated with the installation of speed humps.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented the amendment of the Roads & Bridges Ordinance to the Board.

Commissioner Rowland asked which department this ordinance would fall under.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated he had consulted with Kim Stokes and this would go to the Road Department.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the amendment.

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

GTIB Grant (Old Brent Road Bridge) Agreement

Monroe County applied for a Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) grant for the replacement of the Old Brent Road Bridge. Thanks to Tammy Selman, Monroe County was approved for a \$794,930 grant representing 50% of the projected project’s cost. County Attorney Ben Vaughn has reviewed the agreement and has approved it as to the form.

The way forward is for the Board to authorize the Chairman to sign and to approve the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank Agreement for the Grant Program.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank Agreement for the grant and authorize the Chairman to sign.

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

Electrical Reconnection Inspection Fee

The Community Development Department has historically not charged a fee for reconnection of electrical service that has been discontinued for more than six-months. However, a home that has been disconnected is

required to be inspected by the electrical companies. Mark Goolsby has been performing this inspection as a courtesy and he is scheduled to retire in September.

Charles Abbott & Associates is available to perform these inspections and a new fee is needed for the issuance of an inspection permit.

Community Development Director Kelsey Fortner presented the proposed Electrical Reconnection Inspection Fee to the Board.

Following a Board discussion, Chairman Tapley motioned to set the Electrical Reconnection Inspection Fee at \$75.00.

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

Alcohol License-Ownership Change

Community Development Director Kelsey Fortner presented an ownership change for the alcohol license for the restaurant in River Forest.

Mrs. Fortner stated Jason & Jon Schwerdinger are the new owners of the restaurant in River Forest Subdivision located at 3300 Johnstonville Road. The license will consist of:

- Malt Beverage Packaging
- Malt Beverage Pouring
- Wine Package
- Wine Pouring
- Distilled Spirits

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve.

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

Commissioner Comments

District 1-Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to commend the Board, Mrs. Tammy Selman and all employees for a job well done.

District 2-Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he would like to commend Mrs. Selman as well.

District 3-John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to thank our County Manager Jim Hedges, County Clerk Janet Abbott, and our County Attorney Ben Vaughn. Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to let the public know the road department has not been able to patch the holes in the roads due to the rain and the heat but as soon as it cools down, they will start back up.

District 4-George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated he had no comment.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated he agrees with the other Commissioners in commending the employees.

County Manager Jim Hedges

County Manager Jim Hedges stated he would like to give a shout out to Monroe County EMS for their recent response to a Greyhound bus wreck on I-75. Mr. Hedges stated they did an outstanding job.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Executive Session-Legal

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for legal at 10:36 a.m.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 10:55 a.m.

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

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the Board went into executive session to discuss potential litigation and no action item is needed at this time from the Board.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 10:59 a.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk