

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the November 1, 2022

Regular Commissioners Meeting

6:00 P.M. Meeting

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

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

Natalie Sundeen, County Attorney

Lorri Robinson, County Finance Director

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Rowland led the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Tapley led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Manager Hedges called roll.

Call to Order

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

New Business

Approve Agenda

Commissioner Ambrose asked for Additional Budget Discussion to be added to the agenda.

County Attorney Vaughn asked for Executive Session for litigation to be added to the agenda.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with the proposed additions.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-October 18, 2022

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2022 regular meeting with a revision that Commissioner Emami be listed as present in the minutes and the usual 30 days for changes.

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

Employee Health Insurance

Johnathan Shaw of NFP presented updates on the county's 2023 employee health insurance options. Shaw stated the cost to Monroe County would increase by \$820,499 if the county added a Cigna Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) option to its ClaimDOC insurance. Shaw stated that out of 23 total balance bills that have been reported, 21 of those are at Atrium Navicent. Shaw stated that Atrium has agreed to pause collections on those balance bills until a mutual agreement can be reached. Shaw stated that just .068 percent of total bills have gone to balance bills and stated that members are not responsible for paying those balance bills. Shaw also stated that 95.5 percent of providers have approved acceptance of ClaimDOC plan participants and stated he intends to give employees a list of all providers who have agreed to single case agreements.

Finance Director Robinson stated that Brella supplemental insurance has been effective in financially assisting customers for some medical expenses.

Chairman Tapley stated that some county employees were present and might want to speak on the county's insurance before Commissioners make a final decision. Tapley then asked employees wishing to speak to raise their hands.

Donna Wilson stated that Atrium Navicent is not sending out medical bills to some customers prior to turning the bills over to collections.

Yolanda Mercer of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office stated that her son has a heart condition requiring him to visit Children's Healthcare of Atlanta multiple times per year. Mercer stated she has to call ClaimDOC for hospital clearance in advance of all of her son's visits and stated she doesn't like that her son cannot visit the hospital of his choice without prior approval. Shaw confirmed that Mercer's information is correct about ClaimDOC having to receive clearance from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta before each visit. Chairman Tapley stated he would like for an agreement to be reached

between Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and Mercer or all ClaimDOC plan participants needing to use that facility that will allow them to visit without needing advance clearance each time.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to renew ClaimDOC insurance for 2023 at a \$498,357 (17.1%) increase as compared with 2022.

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

Recreation Department-Netting

Recreation Director Landon Sparks stated that the previously approved contract to provide new safety netting at the recreation fields did not extend far enough to prevent line drives from escaping the field of play. Sparks asked Commissioners for approval of a change order in the amount of \$6,523.57 to install additional safety netting to fill in the gaps in the existing netting. Sparks stated that funds for the project would come from SPLOST money dedicated to recreation.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the change order request.

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

Warren & Associates Agreement

County Attorney Vaughn stated the county has reached an indemnity agreement with Warren Associates, Inc. regarding design build work done on the proposed new High Falls fire station. County Attorney Vaughn stated the agreement allows the county to access "instruments of service" compiled and created by Warren Associates such as floorplan drawings, site surveys, topographical surveys and soil boring reports. County Attorney Vaughn stated that the agreement included no additional cost to the county other than his legal fee for drafting the document.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the indemnity agreement.

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

Riata Subdivision Tap Fees

Commissioner Emami stated he has received inquiries from citizens about the cost of water tap fees at Riata subdivision compared to other locations in Monroe County. County Attorney Vaughn stated that Riata's developer, Standard Properties, Inc., ran a water line to the subdivision at its own expense in 2005. Vaughn stated the developer set a \$2,500 tap fee charge at the time with excess funds to be repaid by the county to the developer for financing the project. County Attorney Vaughn stated that Monroe County offered in 2018 \$40,500 to buy out the remaining repayment amount. Commissioner Emami asked County Attorney Vaughn to further research the matter.

Additional Budget Discussion

Commissioner Emami stated that he wants to thank County Manager Hedges and Finance Director Robinson for their hard work in producing a 2023 county budget. Commissioner Emami stated that he wants Monroe County to set a total budget maximum and work within that parameter to establish expenses rather than setting a total budget amount only after expenses are decided upon. Commissioner Emami stated he is in support of all county employees, including County Manager Hedges, receiving a 5 percent raise for 2023. Commissioner Emami stated that the Development Authority of Monroe County should not have its funds reduced for 2023. Commissioner Emami said the Development Authority is critical in the continued quest for additional industry in Monroe County and said the Authority has a good leadership team in place that he doesn't want to lose. Commissioner Ambrose stated that the Authority has not presented a viable industrial project for Monroe County and does not want to increase its funding. County Manager Hedges stated he would add \$30,000 to the county's contribution to the Authority for 2023.

Chairman Tapley straw polled the other commissioners on whether they wanted to staff an additional six positions at the Russellville fire station in 2023. Four commissioners stated yes while Commissioner Emami stated no, stating he is opposed to adding new positions. Chairman Tapley then straw polled the other commissioners on whether they wanted to staff seven additional positions at the Monroe County Sheriff's Office in 2023. Three commissioners stated yes while Commissioner Rowland only wanted to staff four new positions and Commissioner Emami wanted no new positions. Finally, Chairman Tapley straw polled Commissioners on whether to include a 5 percent pay raise for all county employees in the 2023 budget, and all five commissioners stated yes.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve all proposed 2023 budget expenditures.

Chairman Tapley seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Emami opposed.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Davis commended County Manager Hedges, Finance Director Lorri Robinson, and County Clerk Janet Abbott for their timely and efficient work on the 2023 budget in the wake of last month's announcement that Monroe County will receive about \$2.7 million fewer property tax dollars from public utilities.

Commissioner Rowland stated that he toured the county's Strickland Loop Landfill last week with representatives from the county's new landfill engineering firm, Triple Point Engineering, Inc., the county's Public Works Director Chris Walker, and the county's road consultant Kim Stokes. Commissioner Rowland stated that the visit was informative, and he believes there is a lot of potential to increase revenue at the landfill.

Commissioner Ambrose stated the county's water department needs the capability to be able to read residential water meters from its offices to be able to alert citizens that they have issues with leaks or damaged lines before the customers receive whopping water bills. Commissioner Ambrose stated that he wants county leaders to look further into the cost savings of allowing private companies to buy the county's trash. He also stated that he wants County Attorney Vaughn to see what it would take for the county's landfill agreement to be altered to allow for a height increase to existing cells.

Commissioner Emami stated that Baldwin County has a breakdown on its tax bills of which government entity issued the property tax and what the entity intends to use the tax to provide. Commissioner Emami also congratulated the Monroe County Reporter on its upcoming 50-year anniversary. Commissioner Ambrose stated he enjoys reading the Reporter but stated he objected to a recent column by Reporter editor Will Davis that criticized County Manager Jim Hedges regarding county spending.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Executive Session

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of litigation at 7:29 p.m.

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

Commissioners re-entered into general session at 7:54 p.m.

Action from Executive Session

Following Executive Session, County Attorney Natalie Sundeen gave an overview of what was discussed. No action was taken.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk