

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of November 19, 2024

Regular Commissioners' Meeting

9:00 A.M.

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Eddie Rowland, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

John Ambrose, District 3

Vacant, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Brandon Bowen, Attorney

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Lorri Robinson-Byrd, Finance Director/Asst. County Manager

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Pastor Lloyd Strickland 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.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval, removing item D and adding executive session for personnel.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4-0.

Approve Minutes-November 4, 2024, Regular Meeting

Chairman Tapley presented the minutes of the November 4, 2024, Regular Meeting for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes with the usual 30 days for changes.

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

HB 581 Review

Chief Appraiser Bobby Gerhardt and Senior Technical Manager at Appraisal Services presented the review to the Board to help explain the legislation.

House Resolution 1022, associated with House Bill 581, put forward a referendum to the Georgia voters on November 5, 2024, the question “Shall the constitution of Georgia be amended so as to authorize the General Assembly to provide by general law for a state-wide homestead exemption that serves to limit increase in assessed value of homesteads, but which any county, consolidated government, municipality, or local school system may opt out of upon the completion of certain procedures?” The referendum passed as follows:

	County			State	
Yes	9886	59.4%		3,084,635	62.9%
No	6751	40.6%		1,817,361	37.1%
Total	16,637			4,901,996	

This is a complicated matter that requires action by the Board of Commissioners to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the municipalities and to “opt-in” or “opt-out”, and depending on the direction a further referendum in the spring would be required to impose an additional penny of sales tax that would exclusively be used to reduce property taxes.

Following an extensive discussion by the Board, the Board agreed additional discussion needed to be had and took no action as to whether to opt in or out.

Building Permit Fees-Removed from the agenda

AED/Narcan Policy

EMS Chief Matt Jackson stated the Board recently approved the installation of automated external defibrillators in all government buildings, and the training of staff on the use of those machines and the administration of the drug Narcan. Monroe County Emergency Services has developed a policy/procedure regarding AED and Narcan usage and is asking for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the AEC/Narcan Policy as presented.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Extension Office-Shoot Club

Monroe County Extension Coordinator Rachel Frisbee asked the Boards approval on allowing the 4-H Shooting Awareness Shotgun Team to practice at the recreation department. Ms. Frisbee stated the group has 46 shooters and 9 coaches and they will practice every Sunday from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Ms. Frisbee stated the club currently practices at the Meadows Gun Club, but the price has increased from \$265 to \$430 due to the cost of supplies. As a result of this increase it is now cost prohibitive for some members to participate.

Ms. Frisbee stated she had met with the Recreation Board and contacted all the neighbors bordering the land. Ms. Frisbee stated the area needed will be at least 33 yards long with an additional 100 yards of buffer space for safety, the area will be marked with multiple warning signs stating, "This is a shooting area, please do not enter."

Ms. Frisbee stated she is still searching for a permanent location, and she is only asking to use the recreation department for the 2025 season.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to approve.

Commissioner Davis seconded for discussion.

Commissioner Rowland stated one of the complaints he has heard is regarding the noise. Commissioner Rowland stated there are not any houses located nearby, and noise should not be an issue.

Commissioner Ambrose asked if this would open the county up for liability issues.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the county could be added to the team's current liability policy.

The motion carried 4-0.

E-911 Cell Tower Charge Order

During the repair of the cell towers that were struck by lightning by Williams Communications, the engineers would install components that they deemed necessary, and without receiving approval from

the E-911 staff, resulting in a failure to obtain Board approval for a change order. In May of 2024, Williams Communications sent an invoice to the county for \$69,652, and due to staff changes, this invoice has only just been brought to our attention.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the invoice from Williams Communications for the amount of \$69,652.

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

Alcohol Ordinance Amendment-1st Reading

At the May primary the voters of Monroe County approved having alcohol package stores in the unincorporated area of the county. County Attorney Ben Vaughn was tasked with updating the Alcohol Ordinance and that resulted in an extensive rewrite. Mr. Vaughn stated the ordinance will allow alcohol to be sold in package stores from 8 a.m. until midnight Monday through Saturday and from 12:30 p.m. until 11:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Community Development Director Kelsey Fortner stated some of the changes that were created in the revised ordinance are as follows:

- No new retail package store will be permitted within 500 feet of an existing retail package store
- Updated fees to \$4,300 per year. Convenience stores will pay \$1,000 annually for a beer and wine sales license and restaurants will pay \$1,500 annually for beer, wine, and distilled spirits sales license with consumption on the premises.
- County Attorney Ben Vaughn recommended adding package store to the UDO as a special use in C-2.
- Amending the ordinance to allow for at least 45 days instead of the current 20 days for the Community Development Department to process alcohol ordinance requests and for renewals to be approved by Ms. Fortner instead of coming to the Board.

Ms. Fortner stated the Planning and Zoning Board will hold a public hearing on the final version of the updated alcohol ordinance at 5:30 p.m. January 27, 2025, and the Board will have the final say on Tuesday February 4, 2025.

Commissioner Ambrose suggested a \$2,250 annual renewal fee for package stores.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated this is a first reader so no action is needed. He stated he will make the proposed changes before it comes back to the Board for approval.

Retirement Plan-Ambrose Option

County Manager Jim Hedges stated at the October 1, 2024, Board of Commissioner’s meeting, the county Retirement Plan was updated and approved to move to a tiered multiplier with the understanding that ACCG Retirement Services and their actuary service provider would be contacted to calculate the cost to the county on an optional tiered multiplier scenario. The scenario, “the Ambrose Proposal”, would increase the multiplier from 1.75% to 2.00% beginning with 5 years of credited service and maximizing at 2.5% at 20 years of credited service instead of 30 years of credited service. To implement the “Ambrose Proposal” would increase the annual contribution for the approved tiered multiplier of \$1,880,700 to \$2,060,800, an increase of \$180,100.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the “Ambrose Proposal.”

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion for discussion.

Commissioner Rowland stated the county had already increased the retirement contribution from 1.3 million to 1.8 million and he did not see where the county had the funds for the additional increase.

Following a discussion, Commissioner Ambrose withdrew his motion.

No action was taken.

2025 Budget-Public Hearing

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter a public hearing at 10:39 a.m. for the 2025 Budget.

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

County Manager Jim Hedges stated he would like to publicly thank Finance Director Lorri Robinson and County Clerk Janet Abbot for assistance in pulling the budget together.

Mr. Hedges stated the presentation today is the 2025 Budget Public Hearing as required by law and no vote is required today. Mr. Hedges stated the final budget will be brought to the Board on December 2, 2024, for final approval.

Budget Snapshot

	2024	2025	I/(D)
General Fund	43,858,260	42,888,797	(969,463)
Capital Projects	2,586,454	1,629,370	(957,084)
Enterprise Fund	5,444,859	5,675,538	230,679
Special Fund	3,135,873	2,262,958	(872,915)
	55,025,446	52,456,663	(2,568,783)

Summary

- General Fund decreased by \$969,463
- Capital Expenditures decreased by \$957,084
- Special Fund Expenditures decreased by \$872,915
- Overall Budget decreased by \$2,568,783

The Board thanked County Manager Jim Hedges, Finance Director Lorri Robinson-Byrd and County Clerk/Human Resource Director Janet Abbott for their work on the 2025 Budget.

No citizens addressed the Board in regard to the budget.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 11:05 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments

No public comments

Commissioner's Comments

District 1-Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis thanked Jim Hedges, Lorri Robinson-Byrd and Janet Abbott.

District 2-Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he would like to say thank you to the team for keeping services going and keeping us safe and he looks forward to 2025.

District 3-John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to reiterate that he plans to reorganize the Library on January 1, 2025, if the books are not taken care of at the library. He stated he has asked the Board to allow the county attorney to develop operating instructions to reorganize the library to minimize the time it takes once the library is shut down.

Chairman-Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated we have services put in place and it's the boards obligation to keep the library running. Chairman Tapley stated as the holidays approach he would like to remind everyone of the various Christmas and holiday events happening around our community.

Executive Session-Personnel

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter into executive session for personnel at 11:10 a.m.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 11:51 a.m.

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

Action from Executive Session.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the Board discussed three personnel items and two items have action needed at this time.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve a \$15,000 annual supplement for the Magistrate Judge and to approve a project-based bonus for the public works department.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion for both items and the motion carried 4-0.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 10:52 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 4-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk