

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the December 05, 2023

Regular Commissioners Meeting

6:00 P.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

Commissioner Emami 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 6:00 P.M.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with the removal of item N.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-November 16, 2023, Called Meeting

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2023, Called meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

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

2024 Budget Approval

County Manager Jim Hedges presented the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and Resolution for approval. Mr. Hedges stated given budget assumptions were presented in July and a budget public hearing was held at the November 16, 2023, the December presentation will be brief.

Budget Snapshot:

General Fund	\$41,569,733
Capital Projects	\$3,034,829
Enterprise Funds	\$5,111,569
Special Revenue Funds	\$2,374,617
Total	\$52,090,748

2024 Budget:

GF Revenues

Taxes	\$27,040,500
Licenses & permits	\$770,000
IGA Revenues	\$1,011,741
Charges for Services	\$2,376,100
Fines & Forfeitures	\$2,259,000
Miscellaneous	\$310,000
Other Financing	\$7,802,392
Capital Projects	\$3,034,829

Enterprise Funds

Water	\$3,092,525
Solid Waste	\$1,776,108
Conference Center	\$242,936
Total	\$5,111,569

GF-Expenditures

General Government	\$12,348,263
Judicial	\$1,885,600
Public Safety	\$12,551,193
Public Works	\$2,814,401
Health & Welfare	\$167,273
Culture & Recreation	\$960,882
Housing & Development	\$1,044,856
Debt Service	\$1,181,430
Other Financing Uses	\$8,615,825
Total	\$41,569,733

Special Revenue Funds

Dare	\$84,935
Care Cottage	\$298,153
E-911	\$1,991,529
Total	\$2,374,617

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the way forward is to approve the Resolution to Adopt the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget of \$52,090,748.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Resolution to Adopt the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget but to include the County Manager to receive the same 5% raise as other employees.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion.

The motion carried 5-0.

TSPLOST Resolution

County Manager Jim Hedges stated following the joint TSPLOST meeting with the municipalities and the agreement to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement for the distribution of transportation sales and use tax, the final action required of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners is to adopt a Resolution calling for a Referendum of the voters on March 12, 2024.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the TSPLOST resolution.

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

2024 Holiday Schedule

County Manager Jim Hedges presented the 2024 Holiday Schedule for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

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

Sheriff Budget Adjustment/Vehicles

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the 2024 Budget for the Sheriff's Department included funding for ten (10) patrol vehicles, and one (1) Ford F-350 plus funds for the necessary equipment installed in these vehicles. As background, the vehicle of choice for the Sheriff's Department, and law enforcement in general, is the Dodge Charger. Unfortunately, the maker of the Dodge Charger, FCA (Fiat-Chrysler) announced in 2023 production of this vehicle would cease to be in production.

On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, Col. Michael Hull informed me he had located 11 Dodge Chargers at a dealership in Quitman, Ga., unfortunately, the dealer would not agree to hold the vehicles until our new budget year of 2024. I contacted Chairman Tapley, and Commissioners Davis, Rowland, and Emami and they agree to move the 2024 funding from 2024 to 2023. Col. Hull was informed of the Board's decision and issued the purchase order on that date.

The action from the Board is to formally approve the request of the Sheriff to move the 2024 funding to the 2023 budget.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to formally approve the request of the Sheriff to move the 2024 funding to the 2023 budget.

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

MMAD/Main Street Fundraiser Donations

County Manager Jim Hedges stated he has been petitioned by the Forsyth Main Street Program, Men Making a Difference, and BLU Communities, both non-profit organizations, to request donations for their annual Christmas programs designed to help as many families as possible. Both organizations are deserving, and the Board is asked to consider donations with funding from the Board of Commissioners' discretionary funds.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he thinks the city should do their own and the county do theirs.

Chairman Tapley stated let's separate them out in the motions and start with Men Making a Difference.

Chairman Tapley asked Commissioner Davis what his request for the Men Making a Difference Christmas Program was.

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to use \$1000 of his discretionary funds.

Commissioner Ambrose, Commissioner Rowland, and Chairman Tapley agreed to use \$1000 of their discretionary funds.

Commissioner Emami asked if these organizations were nonprofits.

Commissioner Davis stated the BLU Communities is a 501C3 and they work together with Men Making a Difference.

Commissioner Emami asked had the county done this type of thing before.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated \$20,000 is set aside annually in the budget for nonprofits to request funding.

Chairman Tapley stated these funds are open by request by a certain time period.

Commissioner Emami stated he feels we are setting a precedent in donating \$5,000 for one charity.

Commissioner Emami stated he is going to withdraw his \$1000, because he is concerned about the amount being donated to one charity and there are lots of charities in our area. Commissioner Emami stated he thinks we are making a mistake donating this amount of money to one organization.

Chairman Tapley stated he thinks it should be noted there are other charities and there are funds available, and they should apply. There is a process to go through and every one of the charities is welcome to apply. He stated he wants to suggest next year Men Making a Difference and BLU Communities apply at the same time as the other ones do so that it is not singled out and appear as favoritism.

Commissioner Davis stated we have several organizations that the county donates this amount to.

Commissioner Emami asked Lorri Robinson to send him a list of non-profits that are donated to.

Following and extensive board discussion, Chairman Tapley motioned to donate \$1,000 from District 1's discretionary funds, \$1,000 from District 2's discretionary funds, \$1,000 from District 3's discretionary funds and \$1,000 from the Chairman's discretionary funds for a total of \$4,000 to BLU Communities/MMAD.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Emami opposed.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated Forsyth Main Street is accepting donations and are working with the City of Forsyth and the Care Cottage for the Christmas program, Jingle, Mingle and Candy Cane Crawl in downtown Forsyth on December 9th and for the shop with a City Hero fund raiser. Mr. Hedges stated they are not requesting an amount, just monetary donations.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would prefer the city and the county to do their own Christmas programs.

Commissioner Davis agreed to use a \$1,000 of discretionary funds for the City's shop with a Cop program.

Kimmy Childs Director of Forsyth MainStreet, spoke on behalf of the request. Ms. Childs stated her goal is \$10,000 and they are about halfway there, and they have two fundraisers coming up the following weekend.

Following a discussion, Chairman Tapley motioned for each commissioner to donate \$500 from their discretionary funds to Forsyth MainStreet's 501C3 Christmas programs.

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

Subdivision Plat-Floyd's Mill Subdivision

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented Floyd's Mill Subdivision. Mrs. Fortner stated this is a minor subdivision with the creation of a private road (Floyd's Mill Lane).

Mrs. Fortner stated the plat is from Southern Oak Land, LLC, proposed creation of a 60' private road name "Floyd's Mill Lane" and the division of 6 parcels. All large lots with three of the lots accessing the newly created private road and the other three accessing Floyd Road-an existing county road. Ms. Fortner stated the subdivider is working on everything that is required from Section 10.02.07.

Chad Tyler spoke on behalf of the application.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the plat for Floyd's Mill Subdivision.

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

Subdivision Plat-Jordan Bottoms Subdivision

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented Jordan Bottoms Subdivision-Off Jordan Bottoms Road (Off Abercrombie).

Mrs. Fortner stated the plat is from TNT Dynamos, LLC, on Jordan Bottoms Road (county road) which is off Abercrombie Road. The minor subdivision includes 12 parcels total with one completely off Abercrombie while two other parcels have the option of Jordan Bottoms Road or Abercrombie. Unless the subdivider notes otherwise on the plat. Ms. Fortner stated the subdivider is working on everything that is required from Section 10.02.07.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the plat for Jordan Bottoms Subdivision.

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

P&Z Presentation (Information Only)

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner gave a presentation of the upcoming zoning applications.

P&Z Hearing-Proctor-Variance

Commissioner Emami motioned to open a public hearing at 6:41 p.m. for a variance at 2214 Juliette Road.

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

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a variance located at 2214 Juliette Road, map 065 Parcel 028A. Mrs. Fortner stated the current zoning is agricultural-residential.

Dan Proctor is the property owner and applicant. Mr. Proctor is requesting a variance to divide the 5-acre tract into two 2.5-acre tracts, each 2.5-acre tract will have a home.

Ms. Fortner stated the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 6:42 p.m.

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

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated he wanted to clarify this is under the new code and a later application will be under the old code due to when they applied.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

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

P&Z Hearing-Cheek-Variance

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to open a public hearing at 6:44 p.m. for a variance application located at 601 Elbert Jackson Road.

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

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a variance application located at 601 Elbert Jackson Road, map 086 parcel 031. The current zoning is agricultural-residential.

Stacey Cheek is the applicant and property owner.

Ms. Cheek is asking for a variance to build a second home (stick-built) on a 3.08-acre lot to be placed diagonally behind the existing modular home. The modular home will then be converted into a pool house. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval 4-0, with the condition that the mobile home is not used as a residence once the house is built.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 6:47 p.m.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the application with the recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board that the mobile home is not used as a residence once the house is built.

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

P&Z Hearing-Buckland-Rezoning/Special Use

Commissioner Davis motioned to open a public hearing at 6:50 p.m. for a rezoning/special use for US Hwy 87.

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

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a rezoning/special use application located at 6659 & 6681 HWY 87, map 112B parcel 009 & 010. Mrs. Fortner stated the current zoning is residential. Mrs. Fortner stated based on the date the application was first started it falls under the old zoning ordinance. Mark Buckland is the property owner and applicant.

Mr. Buckland is asking to rezone a residential lot into an agricultural lot with a special use. A structure will be built to park the property owner's personal property from a business he operates. There will be a small office

inside this building; this building will not have heavy traffic. In agricultural zoning the building is allowed; however, the office will require special use.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval 4-0 with the condition that should anyone need to work on the equipment, it be performed in a space that is concrete or graveled with an oil separator.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 6:51 p.m.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the application with the Planning and Zoning Board's recommendation, should anyone need to work on the equipment, it be performed in a space that is concrete or graveled with an oil separator.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion for discussion.

Mr. Buckland spoke on behalf of the application regarding the mechanical repairs of the equipment. Mr.

Buckland stated they usually take their equipment to the dealerships for repairs.

Commissioner Emami stated the original application made no mention of storing heavy equipment and asked if the neighbors were notified of equipment storage.

Mrs. Fortner stated all neighbors were notified of the application.

The motion carried 5-0.

P&Z Hearing-Perez-Variance

The applicant pulled their application prior to the meeting.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to thank his fellow Board members and fellow co-workers for their contributions and stated if you see someone in need this time of year lets try to help them out.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he wanted to highlight the Monroe County Library. They have 7 employees, and 13 board members. Commissioner Rowland stated the Monroe County Library has 24,467 total books and has added 1,996 new books in 2023. They have issued 351 new library cards in 2023 and have had 30,787 total library visitors in the past 12 months.

Commissioner Rowland stated if a citizen has a problem with a book or the location of a book, they want to have reconsidered in the library, there is a process. He stated you would complete a request for reconsideration and submit this to the library and the Library Board would make that consideration.

Commissioner Rowland said, "I think it's important to note that we have a library board to make those decisions, and not this Board," Commissioner Rowland said. "Because if this Board had the authority to make that decision, you would be taking a government entity and allowing them to go into your library and deciding which books to pull off and which books to leave. And that's a little dangerous. That's a little dangerous to me for government having that much authority. It'd be about as dangerous as us saying we're going to buy the newspaper and we're going to put whatever we want to in the newspaper." He stated both sides have the opportunity for free press.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he agrees with Commissioner Davis and Rowland's statements. Commissioner Ambrose stated he still feels the county needs to implement a business license requirement for out of county businesses.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated it would have to be a uniform business license requirement for all in county and out of county residents.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated he is personally part of a fund raiser and would like to get the word out that he is matching dollar for dollar for donations up to \$1500 for the purchase of space heaters to give out in the community. He stated the goal is to purchase 90 space heaters. He stated one of the high school counselors had mentioned to him that they do this each year because there are a number of students in our community that go home to a cold home.

He stated regarding the non-profit discussion that was had earlier; he thinks this is something that should be discussed over the next couple of weeks. He stated he is concerned about this and if the County has a \$20,000 budget for nonprofits maybe that should be raised to \$25,000 or \$30,000 and tell everybody the same thing, apply on time and it will be dispersed fairly and equitably based on the funds budgeted. He stated he personally doesn't like the way it is currently being dispersed; he thinks there must be a better way.

Chairman Tapley stated the county currently has these procedures in place.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated to tag along to the space heaters maybe the fire department can give a smoke detector with each heater given out.

Chairman Tapley recognized Terry Miller as part of Leadership Monroe and stated he is over the High Falls State Park and Dames Ferry Park.

MCBOC approved.

Chairman Tapley also recognized Richard Dumas for his efforts implementing the SeeClickFix program for the county. Chairman Tapley stated it is ready to go live, it is on the county website and citizens can download the app and register to be part of it.

Deputy Jeff Wilson introduced Sgt. Kirk Seckinger stating he is taking over Sgt. Willie Brown's position in court services.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session-

There was no executive session therefore no action was needed.

Adjourn`

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 7:16 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk