

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the February 21, 2023

Regular Commissioners Meeting

9:00 A.M. Meeting

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, Vice Chairman

Eddie Rowland, District 2-Not Present

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

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Davis 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.

Proclamation-Malik Herring

Chairman Tapley presented a proclamation commemorating February 25, 2023, as Malik Herring Appreciation Day and to recognize the outstanding achievements of Monroe County native Malik Herring.

The Board presented the proclamation to Malik's Herring's aunt Tamitha Middleton on behalf of Mr. Herring.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with the addition of the Board of Education Bond Resolution and to move Smarr Fire Station after the Board of Education Bond Resolution.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-February 07, 2023, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the minutes of the February 07, 2023, Regular meeting with the usual 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion.

The motion carried 4-0.

BOE Bond Resolution

Superintendent Mike Hickman presented a bond resolution for the E-SPLOST that was passed in 2022. The county must sign due to being the taxing agent for Monroe County. The bond states the county will collect taxes in the event the School Board defaults on the bond.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

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

Smarr Fire Station

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to surplus the former Smarr Fire Station and to put the property up for live auction.

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

Grants Update

Grant Specialist Tammy Selman presented grants she is asking permission to apply for. Ms. Selman stated the first one is for the Community Facilities Loan and Grant Program-Rural. The grant funds can be used for equipment and equipment-type projects. The grant will provide \$50,000 with no matching requirement/no score. Funds are prioritized based on population and low-income communities. Ms. Selman stated the grant would be used to purchase two vehicles for the Sheriff's Department and \$25,000 will be designated to supplement each of the vehicle costs.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to apply.

Chairman Tapley seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0.

Ms. Selman stated the next grant is the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant. The RAISE grants are for investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact. Funds can be used for the implementation of a capital project or planning of the project. There is approximately 2.275 billion dollars available, with some of the funds being designated for specific projects, such as ports. The amount being asked for is \$4,026,232.65 and a match of 20% is required. The county would be submitting a capital project in the application. Funds would be utilized to address congestion and future usage of Montpelier Road to Thornton Road.

Commissioner Ambrose and Commissioner Emami both agreed they would like for the City of Forsyth to assist Monroe County with the funding.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to apply for the grant.

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

The next grant presented by Ms. Selman was for one intern to be hired to create a video of Monroe County to include the history of the Hubbard Alumni Association. Grants will pay up to \$12.00 an hour-200 hours. Position runs from May until September.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve to apply.

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

Tax Commissioner Job Position

In 2022, Tax Commissioner Lori Andrews came before the Board requesting approval to add an additional employee to her staff. The Board declined the request and stated they would consider the addition at the time of the 2023 budget approval. Given the loss of property tax late in the budget preparation cycle, a number of vacant, and new positions were excluded from the 2023 approved manpower budget.

Tax Commissioner Lori Andrews was present for the request.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve with funding to come from contingency.

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

Siren Grant Update

EMS Chief Matt Jackson and Battalion Chief Clay Walton came before the Board to present an update on the recently awarded Hazard Mitigation Grant.

Mr. Walton stated in May of 2021 the grant was applied for to purchase 2 additional early warning sirens to be located at Cabiness and Dames Ferry Fire Stations. The grant award and the cost at that time was \$56,147.00.

Mr. Walton stated the current cost for two sirens is \$62,257.30.

The current cost resulted in a shortfall of \$6,110.30.

Mr. Walton stated he is requesting approval of \$8,356.18 for local match and price increase to be used towards grant purchase of two additional early warning sirens to be placed at Cabaniss and Dames Ferry Fire Stations.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the request for \$8,356.18 with funds coming from contingency.

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

Ambulance Motor Replacement

EMS Chief Matt Jackson stated one of the five in-service ambulances' engine has failed. The vehicle is a 2020 Ford F-450 with 127,000 miles and Ford is recommending a new engine, turbo, and fuel system replacement at a cost of \$22,451.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned for Chief Jackson to contact several additional repair shops for estimates and to determine if an engine replacement is necessary before purchasing a new engine.

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

Water Rates-2023

County Manager Jim Hedges presented the following options for the 2023 water rates:

- Option 1-Do nothing, remain at the 2022 levels.
 - Produces a positive cash flow.
 - Does not come close to covering depreciation.
 - Deemed to be high, especially for large consumers with pools and sprinkler systems.
- Option 2-Go to the 2023 level.
 - Produces a positive cash flow.
 - Does not come close to covering depreciation, especially as the asset base has grown by \$20 million.
 - Will be viewed as extremely high-water rates and could result in the base consumers, as well as the high consumers cutting back on consumption.
- Option 3-Eliminate the 1,000 gallons included in the base rate and stay at the 2022 rates.
 - Increases cash flow by \$365,000.
 - Disadvantage for fixed income and low to moderate consumers.
 - Deemed high, especially for large consumers with pools and sprinkler systems.
 - Board turned this down at the January 17th meeting.

- Option 4-Establish seasonal rates May-September by capping the rate at 8.97 for all usage greater than 4000 gallons.
 - Primarily benefits the higher consumption users given that the majority of our customers have a consumption level below 4,000 gallons per month.
 - Reduces cash flow significantly.
- Option 5-Establish seasonal rates May-September by reverting to the 2021 rates.
 - Benefits all customers.
 - Lowers the cost for high consumers.
 - Reduces cash flow by \$158,000 annually but should be partially offset by a full year of new customer consumption.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated a poll of the Commissioners resulted in the support of Option 5.

Mr. Hedges stated Tony Rojas, past Executive Director and President of the Macon Water Authority reviewed the options and stated: *“Option 5 is your best option. It benefits all customers, but the County is still anticipated to generate water sales that are above the 2023 budget and may be even higher as you will have a full year of revenue from you new customer base which has grown significantly.”*

Mr. Hedges stated the way forward is to retain the 2023 residential water rates for January-April, and October-December at the 2022 levels, and implement residential seasonal rates at the 2021 level for the period May-September. The commercial rates would remain at the 2022 level.

Following an extensive Board discussion, Commissioner Emami motioned to set the summer rates at \$7.74 per 1,000 gallons for usage more than 4,000 gallons.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-1 with Commissioner Ambrose opposed.

Residential water rates will be as follows:

- \$16.00 base rate up to 1000 gallons
- Additional \$7.59 per 1000 gallons for usage between 1,001 and 4,000 gallons for January-April and October-December.
- Additional \$6.55 per 1,000 gallons for usage between 1,001 and 4,000 gallons for May-September.
- Additional \$8.97 per 1,000 gallons for usage between 4,001 and 10,000 gallons for January-April.
- Additional \$10.35 per 1,000 gallons for usage in excess of 10,000 gallons for January-April and October-December.
- Additional \$7.74 per 1,000 gallons for usage in excess of 4,000 gallons for May-September.

Commercial Water rates will be as follows:

- \$75 base rate which includes the first 1,000 gallons.
- Additional \$8.97 per 1,000 gallons for usage between 1,001 and 10,000 gallons.
- Additional \$10.35 per 1,000 gallons for usage between 10,001 and 40,000 gallons.
- Additional \$11.04 per 1,000 per 1,000 gallons for usage in excess of 40,000 gallons.
- There are no reduced seasonal rates for commercial water customers.

Sheriff's Training Facility

In 2022, Proform Construction was awarded a design/build contract for the Sheriff's Training Facility. After consultation with Sheriff, the design, floorplan, and location have been approved by the Sheriff. The cost of the facility, which will accommodate 60 plus employees and room for two offices, storage, and bathrooms is \$528,796.

Mr. Hedges stated the training facility will be a 40' x 75' or 3,000 square feet with seating capacity for 60 employees. ADA compliant men and women's bathrooms plus a unisex bathroom, two offices, a utility room, a storage room and audio/video ready.

Proform Constructions proposal is as follows:

- Building \$474,821
- Design Fee \$22,719
- Owner Controlled Contingency \$15,000
- Total Project with Contingency \$512,540
- Option
 - Quick-Brik in lieu of standard block \$16,256
- Total Recommended \$528,796

Mr. Hedges stated the way forward is to approve Proform Construction proposal of \$528,796 for the construction of a new training facility for the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve Proform Construction's proposal for the new training facility for the Sheriff's department.

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

Monroe County Roads

Mr. Hedges stated there has been a lot of work done since the county started collecting T-SPLOST, County Manager Jim Hedges and Road Department Consultant Kim Stokes updated the Board on the following road projects:

- McCowan Road-Starts in March

- Lakeshore Drive-Starts in March
- LMIG Projects out to bid, due March 10th, BOC to approve March 21st, completion date of October 31st.
 - Montpelier Station Road
 - Jenkins Road
 - Stokes Store Road
 - Parks Road
 - Josey Road
 - Rumble Road

Mr. Hedges stated the projects out to bid estimate:

• Montpelier Station	\$372,052
• Jenkins Road	\$889,931
• Parks Road	\$557,705
• Josey Road	\$1,007,820
• Rumble Road	\$850,055
• Stokes Store Road	\$1,006,173
• Total	\$4,683,736

Current funding available:

• 2020 Road SPLOST	\$1,500,000
• McCowan Road	(\$1,292,779)
• Lake Shore Drive	(\$206,830)
• 2022 LMIG	\$667,721
• 2023 LMIG	\$681,524
• TSPLOST (April-December)	\$4,114,852
• Total Road Funding Available	\$5,464,488
• Projects out to bid estimate	\$(4,683,739)
• Remaining funds	\$780,749

Mr. Hedges stated he would forward the Board the Neel-Shaffer Study and their packets include an excel spreadsheet with all the roads and their ratings.

Road Consultant Kim Stokes gave the board an update on how TSPLOST would be spent and the road ratings.

Mr. Stokes stated the next list of roads to be considered are as follows:

- Brent Road
- Hopewell Road
- Maynards Mill Road
- New Forsyth Road
- Rock Quarry Road
- Zebulon Road
- Abercrombie Road
- Pate Road
- Spear Road
- Sutton Road

Brodie Law Contract

The contract with the Brodie Law Group for providing legal services to the Probate Court of Monroe County expired on May 31, 2022. Attorney Ben Vaughn has prepared a new contract with an automatic extension clause, with a 60-day cancellation, that if approved would be effective upon approval by the Board of Commissioners. Financial term of \$65,000 annually remain as in the expired contract.

Probate Court Judge Donna Robins was present for the request.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the contract with Brodie Law Group.

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

Vehicle Trade-In-Sheriff's Dept.

The Sheriff's Department is seeking approval to surplus two vehicles, a 2009 Nissan Maxima, and a 2019 GMC Sierra which will be traded in towards the purchase of a 2023 GMC truck.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the request to surplus the vehicles to be used for trade in.

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

Design/Build-Gymnasium

Commissioner Davis has asked for consideration be given to advertise a Design/Build contract for the construction of a new gymnasium at the recreation department. Proform Construction has evaluated the existing facility and indicated it would be too costly to expand the existing building and the more cost-effective approach would be to build over the existing outside courts.

At the February 7, 2023, BOC meeting this topic was discussed and it was agreed to form a committee composed of representatives from the Board of Education, the City of Forsyth, and the Monroe County Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Davis stated he had reached out to the Board of Education and they had told him they were not interested in building a swimming pool. Commissioner Davis expressed the critical need for a second gymnasium at the Recreation Department.

Commissioner Davis motioned to advertise for a Design/Build contract for a gymnasium at the recreation department.

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

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Emami stated there will be a High Falls Bike Ride at 9 am on March 25th to benefit the new High Falls community garden. Commissioner Emami stated registration will be held the morning of the ride and the cost for participation is \$20 per rider.

Commissioner Emami stated in light of all the train derailments of late, he would like to have the EMS Chief come and tell the Board and the community what procedures we have in place in case Monroe County were to have such an incident happen.

Chairman Tapley reminded everyone of the county wide clean-up day on March 4th.

Chairman Tapley stated on March 1st, the Monroe County Hospital is doing a presentation at the Fine Arts Center for the Georgia Hearts Rural Tax Credit program to make citizens aware of how to get a tax credit and donate their state taxes to the local hospital.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to encourage all residents to purchase address signs from Monroe County Emergency Services. He stated it is very critical that all residence have a visible address sign.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Executive Session (Personnel)

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter executive session for personnel at 10:50 a.m.

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

Commissioner Davis motioned to close executive session at 11:05 a.m.

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

Action from Executive Session

Chairman Tapley stated there was a personnel matter discussed and no action is needed at this time.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 11:08 a.m.

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

MCBOC Minutes of February 21, 2023, meeting
MCBOC Approved March 07, 2023, meeting

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk