

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

September 08, 2021

This meeting was held by Zoom due to COVID-19.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Alfred McCoy, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Shirley Hines

Staff Present: Theron Gay, Deputy County Clerk Allyson Stephens, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and County Attorney Nathan Lee.

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Threadgill called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

INVOCATION – Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made to adopt the agenda by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. All were in favor.

III MINUTES

A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy to accept the minutes of the August 24, 2021, 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley. All were in favor.

IV. MUNICIPAL COMMENTS

None

V. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS COMMENTS

Tax Commissioner Catherine Jenkins stated she would like to discuss some things that have happened in her office recently and asked Chairman Threadgill if she had a time limit. Chairman Threadgill responded to Tax Commissioner Jenkins explaining that this was the time she had to speak on things happening in the Tax Commissioner's office but if it was a presentation then she would have to get with Beverly or Allyson to be scheduled on the agenda for the next meeting. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that this was regarding things happening in her office and wanted to know what her time limit was. Chairman Threadgill stated that she had five minutes. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated they have had issues getting I.T. support in the office recently. She is asking for clarification from the Board and stated that she has had some email communication from County Administrator Gay, but she still doesn't have the clarification that she needs concerning this. She stated the present issue is that they are not having their I.T. support needs met. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated they have had new computers hooked up but are missing the software needed for new employees to use the computers. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that Mr. Richmond, County I.T. Director was at her office last week but was instructed by the County Administrator to leave the office before completing what was needed to be done. Chairman Threadgill asked Tax Commissioner Jenkins if she knew the reason the I.T. Director was asked to leave. Tax Commissioner Jenkins then asked Chairman Threadgill if she could finish. Chairman Threadgill stated that she would be allowed to finish, however she made a statement, and he would like the answer to the question. Tax Commissioner Jenkins then stated well okay if you are not going to let me continue. Chairman Threadgill stated to her that he did not state that she could not continue, however when she is presenting information to the Board in order for the Board to understand the information, all information would need to be presented. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated she would like to present all the information and would hope the Board would offer her that concession before interrupting her. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated to Chairman Threadgill that the question that he asked was a loaded

question. Chairman Threadgill stated he felt that Tax Commissioner Jenkins' statement was a loaded statement. Chairman Threadgill explained to Tax Commissioner Jenkins that she was making insinuations and very open statements and not willing to answer the questions regarding those statements. Chairman Threadgill advised Mrs. Jenkins that if she would like to continue and answer the questions without making insinuations then she could but if she chose not to do that then as far as he was concerned, she could request to put herself on the agenda for the next meeting. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that it was unfortunate as she understands the Board will be voting on the budget today and that affects her office. Chairman Threadgill advised her that the Board was not voting on the budget in today's meeting. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that she understood that Administrator Gay advised Mr. Richmond to leave after Mr. Richmond refused to provide any documentation about cables being moved in her office. Tax Commissioner Jenkins asked Chairman Threadgill if that adequately summed up what the issue was. Chairman Threadgill responded with "okay." Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that this is exactly the problem and has been the issue several times. She went on to state that as per their meeting prior, she would like to be made aware of any work done in her office ahead of time, such as any type of work that involves the internet system or network connection, so she has verification of what's being done. Chairman Threadgill stated that he would like to speak about the meeting since she pointed it out. He stated the meeting included himself, Commissioner Plant, Theron, and Skip. Chairman Threadgill stated that after the meeting he felt there was some type of middle ground as she had walked Skip around and shown him exactly what needed to be done and the cables that needed to be moved in certain offices and that a list of items was given to Skip that needed to be completed. Chairman Threadgill pointed out to Tax Commissioner Jenkins that Skip advised her that the printers and equipment would have to be ordered and he couldn't give a specific deadline. Chairman Threadgill stated that he doesn't understand what is needed to be presented to her as on the day of the meeting the Tax Commissioner stated herself exactly what needed to be done and what needed to be provided in the offices and this is exactly what was being done by Skip on the day that she refused for the gentleman to come in and pull the cables through the office because she didn't have a form. Chairman Threadgill stated that he is sorry, but a form is not provided to every office, but when an office tells us what is needed to continue with work and considering there may be times when a vendor is working nearby and can come and do the work, we need to move forward. He stated that this is the work that she herself had already told them needed to be done. Chairman Threadgill stated he is not following what Tax Commissioner Jenkins' issues are. Tax Commissioner Jenkins advised Chairman Threadgill that that was incorrect. Chairman Threadgill stated that is not incorrect as he was in the meeting. Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated that he was not there when, and Chairman Threadgill stated no he was not there then, but he was in the meeting when Tax Commissioner Jenkins stated what was needed. Chairman Threadgill then suggested that Tax Commissioner Jenkins schedule herself on the agenda as they have an entire agenda to move forward with and they are not going to allow this as far as he is concerned. Tax Commissioner Jenkins begin to rebut what Chairman Threadgill stated and kept talking. Chairman Threadgill then called Tax Commissioner Jenkins out of order and stated that she would have to request to be on the next agenda. Tax Commissioner Jenkins asked if she needed to submit a written request and Chairman Threadgill stated that a request needed to be made to Beverly or Allyson. Tax Commissioner Jenkins continued to speak over Chairman Threadgill and was eventually muted and the next item on the agenda was addressed.

VI. DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

None

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

2021 Property Millage Rate – A motion was made to go into Public Hearing at 9:10 a.m. by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant. All were in favor. Chief Tax Appraiser Gene Underwood was in attendance to present. Mr. Underwood stated the School Board met the previous evening and has approved their millage rate. Mr. Gay stated that a resolution has been prepared and that every tax rate recommended is the rollback rate, including the Fire District and Fire Bond. Mr. Gay stated

that the millage rate was reduced slightly from last year. Unincorporated and Incorporated areas of the county millage rate is 13.239 mils, Fire District is 2.483 mils, Fire Bond is 0.695 mils, School District is at 18.641 mils and the School Bond at 3.178 mils. Mr. Gay stated all the millage rates are reduced from last year, and the 5-year history has been properly advertised. Finance Director Gregory stated the gross millage rate over the last five years has gone down but the volume of taxes collected has gone up each year which signifies a healthy growth in the County. Administrator Gay stated since 2016 the gross digest has increased by a little over 100 million dollars. No one wished to speak during the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to go out of Public Hearing at 9:15 a.m. Commissioner Neely-Hadley wanted it mentioned that the millage rate has gone down every year since 2017. All were in favor.

2021-2022 Preliminary Budget – A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go into Public Hearing at 9:17 a.m. All were in favor. Finance Director, Bill Gregory briefly went over the budget with the Board. He explained there was a contingency budget of \$150,000. He went on to show the increase of funding for LMIG as in 2021 \$677,856 was awarded to the county and for 2022 \$748,315. Director Gregory stated new budget lines for communications and that some things were moved out of I.T.'s budget and classified as communications. Director Gregory explained the Human Resources preliminary budget. Commissioner Neely-Hadley left the room at 9:18 a.m. and returned at 9:19 a.m. Director Gregory explained the preliminary budget under the Commissioner's line item. Chairman Threadgill wanted to make it clear to the public that this is not just the Board of five but everyone that falls under them. Director Gregory suggested changing the name from Commissioners to Administration. Director Gregory explained that there was a slight increase in the Election preliminary budget due to a request for 2 part-time employees. Director Gregory explained that the Tax Commissioner is requesting another full-time employee for a total of \$42,233. Chairman Threadgill asked how many employees that would give her and was advised that there were 10 to 11 employees on the payroll. Director Gregory stated that the Tax Commissioner would like to increase advertising/legal publications by \$12,000 as she is anticipating more tax sales. Director Gregory stated she would also like to increase her training budget to send more staff to training classes. Mr. Gay asked Mr. Gregory had any of the advertising funds been spent to date and Director Gregory advised him there had been nothing spent on advertising. Director Gregory stated there was really no change for the Tax Assessors other than increasing regular employees to account for merit raises. Director Gregory reported no changes to the Building and Grounds budget but did state that Information Technology went down due to moving some things to Communications. According to Director Gregory the Superior Court has a request to add dollars for pre-trial diversion. Mr. Gay stated this is a program the District Attorney asked the County to consider. He states people on pre-trial diversion will pay a fee, and about half of the fee comes back to County. Commissioner Neely-Hadley left the room at 9:23 a.m. Director Gregory stated no major changes in Magistrate Court or Probate Court other than personnel increased in Probate for a part-time employee. Director Gregory explained the reason for the increase in the Public Safety budget specifying this is for the labor of EMS personnel. He explained that costs had gone up due to insurance costs and personnel costs. Director Gregory discussed Inmate Care and the reasons for the increase in inmate food being due to no one to staff the kitchen and the food provider is having to perform the tasks of preparation as well. He also explained that inmate medical had gone up due to the aging population in the jail. Director Gregory stated that the Sheriff is asking for an increase in pay of \$2.00 per hour for Certified Deputies and \$1.50 per hour for Certified Jailers. Director Gregory stated that the Sheriff's Office is receiving reimbursement from the City of Luthersville. Director Gregory stated this should offset the increase and also brought up the recent increases in gasoline. With all mentioned, the budget is only going up \$84,000 for the Sheriff's Office per Director Gregory. Chairman Threadgill asked what the \$2,569,553 dollar amount was. Director Gregory made him aware that is for the entire payroll package and includes all insurance. Director Gregory stated there was no change in the Jail budget. He explained that the EMS budget is increasing due to more call volume and vendor charges. Commissioner Neely-Hadley re-entered the meeting at 9:26 a.m. Director Gregory stated there were not significant changes in the Coroner's budget and that E-911 is asking for a \$1.00 per hour pay increase for dispatchers. There

were no changes in the EMA budget and Animal Shelter was the same. According to Director Gregory Public Works budget increased for contract services and to add personnel. Director Gregory stated there were no changes for Recreation and Building and Zoning requests to add one more employee. The overall budget, per Director Gregory is \$17,003,181. Director Gregory went on to state that in order to pay for this we are receiving grants, tipping fees, and there is \$2.5 million in the regular fund. Director Gregory stated we were in a good place, but we would have a challenge in the coming year as the SAFER Grant pays for 23 positions and we only budget for 18. He stated that in the next budget year this will have to be accounted for. Commissioner Neely-Hadley wanted to know if the SAFER Grant was something that we could re-apply for. Director Gregory stated it could be applied for, but only for additional firefighters. Vice Chairman McCoy asked that when numbers are run again to use a lighter blue shade to make it easier to read. Director Gregory provided a breakdown of the \$200,000 for employee benefits. No one wished to speak after the information was provided. A motion was made by Vice Chairman McCoy to come out of Public Hearing at 9:34 a.m. Commissioner Plant seconded the motion. All were in favor.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Approve 2021 Property Millage Rate. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to approve the 2021 Property Millage Rates as presented and sign the resolution. All were in favor.
2. Request to purchase Mini Excavator and Compact Track Loader. Bill Cawthorne with Public Works stated during the August 11, 2021, meeting the Board moved forward to purchase additional equipment for Public Works. Mr. Cawthorne stated that he located the mini excavator and compact track loader through the Yancey Brothers with the Sourcewell contract as this was a federal bidding process. Mr. Cawthorne stated they chose to go through Yancey Brothers as everyone else had a 5-6 month waiting period. Mr. Gay stated there was two requests and this one was already mentioned, and they needed to bring it back with the costs. A motion was made by vice Chairman Mccoy and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to purchase a mini excavator and compact track loader through SPLOST funding, for a total of \$154,441.00. All were in favor.
3. Request to purchase: one (1) used single-axel dump truck, one (1) used 2000-gallon water truck, and one (1) used vibratory pad foot compactor. Mr. Gay stated he would like the equipment to be used for the dirt road crews and pay for it out of TSPLOST. A motion was made by Commissioner Neely-Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant to purchase one (1) used single-axle dump truck, one (1) used 2000-gallon water truck, and one (1) used vibratory pad foot compactor through United Rentals with TSPLOST funding for a total of \$171,450.00. All were in favor.
4. Presentation from Meriwether County Airport Authority – General overview of projects completed and future projects. Phil and Whitney Eberly of Lead Edge Design Group gave an update on completed and upcoming projects at the Roosevelt Airport. As of today, the airport has extended its runway to 5,000 feet, there is a 10-unit t-hangar that is full and a large storage hangar which is also full. Mr. Eberly stated there have been safety improvements and obstruction clearing as well as apron crack seal and marking which was followed up by the runway crack seal and marking. Mr. Eberly advised that the LED windsock has been replaced and the beacon tower was repainted to current FAA standards. Mr. Eberly stated with the new fuel farm replacement and self-serve card reader, fuel sales have increased 1,100%. Mr. Eberly discussed the importance and economic impact of ad valorem taxes on a single engine plane is anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000 per year, a twin-engine plane is anywhere from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per year, and small to mid-sized jet, which we do not currently accommodate, but are working on, can be \$15,000 to \$150,000 per year. Mr. Eberly discussed upcoming projects that will be happening at the airport. He stated there will be an automated weather observing system (AWOS). Mr. Eberly stated this system should be installed within 6 months and is a major upgrade for the airport. Mr. Eberly stated the airport is also working on a new 10-unit t-hangar and 3 box hangars which will allow entities to lease and put multiple aircraft in one building. This will be funded by an Airport Authority loan of

approximately \$1.6 million dollars to be paid back in 15 years and the Airport Authority will receive revenue from rent. Mr. Eberly explained with adding the new hangars it will increase the based aircraft from 15 to 30 meaning more ad valorem tax to Meriwether County as well as moving the airport up in the ranking from 64th to 37th. Mr. Eberly stated there will be activities coming up for the airport and a fly-in is scheduled for Saturday, October 16, 2021. He also stated there will be specific projects for the 90th anniversary of the airport in 2022. Mr. Eberly stated some of the key takeaways is the Meriwether County Airport is moving up and there is an economic ripple effect from airport related activity and the airport is a community airport that reflects the positive environment of Meriwether County. Commissioner Neely-Hadley asked if the difference of the box hangar and t-hangar was the size of aircraft. Mr. Eberly stated that this is correct the t-hangar allows for single aircraft. Mr. Eberly stated by having the box hangars, it offers the renters more options for aircraft. Chairman Threadgill thanked Mr. Eberly for the presentation and stated the Board looked forward to the October event.

5. Update on Road Paving requests. Mr. Gay stated there were two requests received for the paving of dirt roads. Mr. Gay stated that there was a request on Beulah Evans Road. He stated there were 31 parcels that would need to dedicate 30 ft of right-of-way. Mr. Gay went on to explain that some of the signatures owned multiple parcels. When looking at the signatures according to Mr. Gay, of the 31 total parcels there were only 11 signatures that relate to the property on the road. Mr. Gay explained that the signatures have to be from owners on Beulah Evans Road. He states there will need to be some more work done on this request. Mr. Gay stated that Beulah Evans Road did meet some of the criteria such as being county maintained, having a minimum of 75 vehicle trips per day, and having a house every 500 ft. of roadway. Mr. Gay stated the major hold up on the request is getting signatures of at least 20 more parcels.

Mr. Gay stated the other request was to pave Leroy Robinson Road. He advised there are only six homes on Leroy Robinson Road, and they are all located toward the end. Mr. Gay stated there must be a minimum of at least 75 trips per day and with only 6 homes this would not meet the minimum. Mr. Gay explained that with all the homes being toward the end of the road, there would be about 2,450 LF of roadway that would be paved before you got to a home. Mr. Gay stated the request on Leroy Robinson would struggle with the 75 trips per day and the road doesn't have one resident per every 500 ft of roadway. Mr. Gay stated that the signatures obtained were good, but he was not sure with the other criteria this road would meet the specifications. Mr. Gay advised Beulah Evans Road does meet most criteria but would need signatures of additional owners on Beulah Evans Road and he would get with Mrs. Womack to discuss the petition and what still needed to be done.

6. Marcelle Womack – Resurfacing of roads. Mrs. Womack started out asking questions about the process or steps that needed to be taken to get Bob Cat and Whippoorwill subdivisions resurfaced? Mr. Gay advised her that two of the roads that are to be resurfaced are Bob Cat Trail and also Turkey Trail Court. Mr. Gay explained to her that if she was looking to have additional roads resurfaced, she could speak with her District Commissioner. Mr. Gay explained that there are only so many miles of resurfacing available in each District per year. Mrs. Womack then asked if Mr. Gay had time to review the petition to pave Beulah Evans Road. Mr. Gay advised her that we received the signatures, however there were only 11 signatures out of 31 signatures needed that could dedicate right-of-way meaning there would still need to be 20 signatures obtained from residents on Beulah Evans Road. Mrs. Womack advised that a lot of those parcels are owned by the same owner. Mr. Gay stated that imminent domain is an option that he would not recommend. Mr. Gay offered to get with Mrs. Womack and help get the parties that haven't signed. Mrs. Womack also stated that Tyrell and his crew had done good work on the road over the last two weeks, and she could see that more residents on the road are starting to take more pride on the road. Mr. Gay stated there are 20 parcels that still need signatures. Mrs. Womack's internet connection was very spotty, and Chairman Threadgill asked if Mr. Gay could please contact her after the meeting. Mrs. Womack agreed and stated that would be great. Mrs. Womack agreed to have Mr. Gay give her a call after the meeting.

X. REPORT FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR

Finance Director Gregory presented the Board with bank balances and stated the balances look good and strong.

XI. REPORT FROM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Gay stated there had been several meetings on economic activity and broad band. He also stated there have been several meetings on water service and waterline expansions. Mr. Gay advised he had been working on some of the road processes. He also advised he sat in on a few of the budget meetings with Finance Director Gregory. Mr. Gay stated that Michelle Irizarry, the new County Administrator will be coming in on Monday, and we are looking forward to that. Mr. Gay advised it will be a busy year and a busy 2022 spring with a lot of projects, and we should know this month regarding the recreation project grant. Mr. Gay thanked the staff and the Board for all their assistance with the many projects ongoing and stated it made coming to work a pleasure.

XII. REPORT FROM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Shirley Hines: Absent

Commissioner Rosla Plant: Commissioner Plant stated Keep Meriwether Beautiful is on Saturday, September 18, 2021, and will be a little different this year. She advised that they will be taking tires but will limit this to Meriwether County residents only with a maximum of 12 tires. Commissioner Plant stated there will be notices at the different disposal sites of what can be disposed of at those locations. Commissioner Plant encouraged everyone and stated it was a great time to clean up Meriwether. Commissioner Plant thanked Public Works for all the hard work they have done with the many road calls.

Commissioner Beth Neely-Hadley: Commissioner Neely-Hadley wanted to make sure that the letter of support that was requested at the last meeting had been done and signed. Deputy Clerk Stephens advised the letter was ready to be signed.

Vice Chairman McCoy: Vice Chairman McCoy echoed Commissioner Plant in thanking the Public Works department on all their work on the many road calls. Vice Chairman McCoy stated the Town of Gay was having a re-dedication and barbeque on Saturday, September 11, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. with lunch from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Chairman Bryan Threadgill: Chairman Threadgill stated he had already discussed an issue with the condition of Starling Road with Mr. Bill Cawthorne and thanked him for helping with the road.

XIII. REPORT FROM COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Nathan Lee stated he had nothing to report unless the Board had any questions. No questions from the Board. Mr. Gay stated there was a need for Executive Session to discuss Real Estate, Personnel, and Litigation.

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jane Fryer of the Meriwether County Industrial Development Authority presented the Board with a Korean cake from KB Autosys and Yunchang Construction Company. Ms. Jane stated they brought two cakes; one for the staff and one for the Board to thank everyone for all the help that has been put in to help them get to where they are.

XV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made to go into Executive Session at 10:12 a.m. to discuss Real Estate, Personnel, and Litigation by Commissioner Neely Hadley and seconded by Commissioner Plant. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to go out of Executive Session at 11:02 a.m. No action was taken in Executive Session.

XVI. FUTURE MEETINGS & NOTICES

Chairman Threadgill announced future meetings.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Neely-Hadley to adjourn the meeting at 11:03 a.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Allyson G. Stephens

Date: September 28, 2021