

**Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Regular Business Meeting
April 18th, 2023**

Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chair Thrash, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. The meeting was available via Zoom.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

Everyone said the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Roger Milam of Christ Chappel Church gave the invocation.

III. Agenda Approval

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Minutes Approval

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- i. Workshop Minutes-March 16th, 2023
- ii. Public Hearing Minutes-March 21st, 2023
- iii. Regular Business Meeting Minutes-March 21st, 2023

V. 2nd Reading Ordinance 2023-02 Amendment for County Insurance

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the 2nd Reading of Ordinance 2023-02 Amendment for County Insurance to eliminate outdated code with plans to incorporate the new code within the Personnel Policy. Commissioner Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Ordinance 2023-05 Rezoning from Agriculture-Residential to Residential (Tax Map 097, Parcel 007)

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve Ordinance 2023-05 Rezoning from Agriculture-Residential to Residential (Tax Map 097, Parcel 007). Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Subdivision Final: Fox Crossing Phase 3B (040001)

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to table the request for Subdivision Final: Fox Crossing Phase 3B until the May Regular Business meeting. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- i. Resolution 2023-01 Acceptance of Final Plat for Fox Crossing Phase 32B
- ii. Resolution 2023-02 Acceptance of Roads in Fox Crossing Phase 3B
- iii. Resolution 2023-03 Acceptance of Storm Drain Structures in Fox Crossing Phase 3B

VIII. Resolution 2023-04 Engineering Study from DOT for the Widening of Rock Springs Road

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-04 Engineering Study from DOT for the Widening of Rock Springs Road. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Surplus Vehicles for the Sheriff's Office

Vice-Chair Thrash made a motion to approve the surplus vehicles for Vin #0129 and Vin #3611. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Fire Hydrant Flow Test

Chairman Traylor stated that a citizen complained about fire hydrants not having a blue reflector. Recently in planning the Great Day of Service event, they were going to have a team go out and put blue reflectors marking the fire hydrants. However, Fire Chief Matthews pointed out that the Fire Department has a Fire Hydrant App (app) used in the County and the Cities. The active emergency call goes to 911 dispatch, and the app sends the address. The call's details include the addresses of those initiating, who responded, and who is going to the emergency call. The features in the app show the location of the fire hydrants in trailer parks, subdivisions, commercial buildings, and residential areas. If a road is closed, he can drop a pin and everyone on the app receives the information simultaneously. The hydrants at Gordon State College and Lamar County High School have marked fire hydrants. The Fire Department and other pieces of property in the County are marked for helicopter landing zones. Fire Chief Matthews stated that gate numbers to apartment complexes or subdivisions could be entered into the 911 app. Having house numbers, blue reflective signs with house numbers, gate codes, and emergency contacts from the public would help the Fire Department in case of a fire or other emergency situation. The blue reflective signs are sold at the Fire Department for a cost of \$20.00 and are installed at driveways by the Fire Department. Vice-Chair Thrash pointed out that having properly tested Fire Hydrants helps with the County's ISO rating, which affects the citizen's insurance cost.

County Administrator Townsend pointed out that to maintain the ISO rating of 5/9, they will need to help the City of Barnesville with the fire hydrant test flows. The Multi Hydrant Flow Test Fire Hydrant Condition Assessment includes 500 fire hydrants for a total cost of \$70,000.00. The Board of Commissioners had previously agreed to allocate \$35,000.00 for these tests.

Chairman Traylor pointed out that the ISO ratings affect insurance premiums. He stated that when the City installs water in the County, they are required to connect a fire hydrant every 500 ft. After this, the City is not required to do anything with the fire hydrants, and they become the responsibility of the County. The City has agreed to pay the larger portion of the fire hydrant flow test of \$70,000.00, with the County contributing \$35,000.00.

Commissioner Lovett requested that he explain the ISO rating. Fire Chief Matthews stated that the Fire Department is rated on three factors. The Fire Department, the Communication System, 911 and water. The increase in tanker trucks helps with the ISO ratings, and the County is currently at a 5/9. If you live within 100 ft of a fire hydrant and if you are outside of that, you become a 9. They hope to have a third tanker from SPLOST that will bring the ISO rating to a 5. If they do not score well, then the number goes up, as well as the insurance cost. A rough guess would be around \$400.00, according to Fire Chief Matthews.

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve \$35,000.00 in assisting the City of Barnesville with the fire hydrant flow test funded out of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Vice-Chair Thrash seconded the motion. Chairman Traylor said that they met with the cities about the future. This is not a budgeted expense, and they are County fire hydrants. The City of Barnesville had two employees who tested all fire hydrants. Since they are no longer doing this for the City of Barnesville, it has not been done in the last five years. Commissioner Lovett stated that in the workshop meeting, the numbers varied, and by the time they add more fire hydrants that are found, the cost will increase, which could increase the millage rate. County Administrator Townsend said that some new information was discovered today regarding testing the fire hydrants, and they may be able to perform the testing in-house. Fire Chief Matthews said that after testing the initial 500 fire hydrants, the firefighters could test the remaining fire hydrants. Fire Chief Matthews stated that he had no definite answer to this new discovery. Chairman Traylor said it is not just about the ISO rating but also about keeping everyone safe by testing the fire hydrants. The City of Barnesville marked 500 hydrants, but Fire Chief Matthews's data showed 800 fire hydrants, with 50 more identified. The contribution of \$35,000.00 towards the \$70,000.00 will have all 500 fire hydrants tested with the rest of the identified fire hydrants tested in-house.

Commissioner Lovett stated that he would like to be informed of any new information that County Administrator Townsend and Fire Chief Matthews receive because the amount needed for the fire hydrant flow test drastically changed since they discussed this in the Workshop meeting. Commissioner Gilles inquired about the contract where they have to pay the flaggers \$1500.00 a day and what happens if they exceed the projected amount of 41 to 43 days. Chairman Traylor said that their contribution is not to exceed \$35,000.00. He further stated that the approval of this contribution cannot be tabled until next month because the test has to be performed for the ISO ratings. Commissioner Gilles echoed Commissioner Lovett and said she wants to see the new information before voting on anything. County Administrator Townsend said he found out the new information today at 5:45 p.m. Chairman Traylor said he could table this and call a Special Called meeting. Commissioner Lovett said he was good at capping the contribution at \$35,000.00. Chairman Traylor said that at the Workshop meeting, County Administrator Townsend said it could cost the County more for the fire hydrant testing due to the number of fire hydrants found in the County outside of the 500. He said he assumed

that the Board of Commissioners would be happy if it would cost the County no more than \$35,000.00. Chairman Traylor repeated the motions and asked for discussion.

James Hyde of 116 White Oak Drive, Jackson, Georgia, addressed the board. He said this is a good plan and liked the suggestion of tabling the motion until they can have a Special Called meeting. He said he would like to hear from Fire Chief Matthews about what he can do in-house. He said that he knows from the neighboring counties that it is a requirement of the Fire Department's regular duties to test and maintain the fire hydrants. He said he does not know how many paid firefighters they have and that this may not be feasible for all 800 fire hydrants in the County. He said that he is good with the \$35,000.00 to get the 500 fire hydrants tested. Mr. Hyde said that this should be a regular duty of the full-time firefighters to make this rotation based on the requirements, whether once a year or every two years. He said he would like this to be a part of the firefighter's job description.

County Administrator Townsend said that in defense of Fire Chief Matthews, this was an Administrative issue and, in the past, they were instructed to keep their hands off of the fire hydrants. Chairman Traylor said that in the past, the County did not have access to utilize the fire hydrants, only in the case of a fire. This has changed, and they now own the fire hydrants. The plan is to use the contribution of \$35,000.00 to get the 500 fire hydrants tested and create a plan to get the rest of the fire hydrants tested.

Fire Chief Matthews addressed Mr. Hyde. He said that there is a two-system procedure. There is a two-person test from hydrant to hydrant to get a flow test residual. There is also a pressure and flow test where one person opens and closes it to ensure the fire hydrant works. The issue has been not being able to touch the fire hydrants in his entire career of being with the Fire Department, which puts them in this position, and in July he realized that more needed to be done to test the fire hydrants. Fire Chief Matthews said that it would be in the plans to set out certain days that the City of Barnesville will allow them to do a flush and the bump test throughout the year. He said that all 800 fire hydrants have to be touched every year, and there are only two fire engines and four firefighters; 2 are in the South, and two are in the North end of the County. The issue is with Hwy 36 East; where do they park the fire truck to check the fire hydrants? He said he tried to mark them by pulling them over in the ditch. He said this would be 10-hour days for the firefighters and 43 days to get 500 fire hydrants done.

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve \$35,000.00 assisting the City of Barnesville with the fire hydrant flow test funded by ARPA. Vice-Chair Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend reported the following:

- i. Reported that revenues over expenditures for March are at 25.00% and are actually at 20.69%.
- ii. Reported that the gym renovation is having issues, and they have a consultant giving some input on the fire retardant painting. He said there are some issues with cracking with the insulation, and he has someone working on this.

- iii. Reported that sheetrock, ceiling tile, lights, and rental air conditioner units are being installed in the new Administration building. Electrical and plumbing are ongoing. Working on the septic tank issue.
- iv. Reported that he, a roofing consultant, is working on an RFP for the roof repairs at the Courthouse and the Jail.

Vice-Chair Thrash reported that the problems with the roof at the Courthouse were caused by the company that installed the air conditioners. They have since gone bankrupt. She asked County Attorney Mayfield if there was any recourse to go after them. County Attorney Mayfield said that if they are out of business, they are out of luck. He said that the deadline to file a claim had been missed because of the timeframe of them being out of business and filing bankruptcy. He said if Chapter 11 or 13, you can file a claim, but if it is straight bankruptcy, no files are claimed, and the business goes away. County Administrator Townsend said that it was straight bankruptcy. He said the report on the roof showed cuts where they moved the units with a truck and tears where they cut metal. County Attorney Mayfield said he would look at the bankruptcy case once County Administrator Townsend sends it to him.

- v. Reported that the Local Options Sales Tax (LOST) distribution for March was \$129,354.71.
- vi. Reported that the Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST) distribution for March was \$224,582.24.
- vii. Reported that the Transportation Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (TSPLOST) for March was \$207,797.83.
- viii. Reported that the cash flow is on track, but the revenues are running lower.
- ix. Reported that C.W. Matthews will start the Street Rehabilitation on Weldon Lake Run, Liberty Hill Road, and Silver Dollar Road on Thursday. The Microsurfacing will begin on May 5th, including Potts Pond, Cook, Heavy, Cauthen, Van Buren, Bush, Johnstonville, Five Points, Country Kitchen and Brooks Road. This is the first phase of TSPLOST.

X. Public Comments

Mike Perry of 101 Maple Drive, Barnesville, Georgia, addressed the board. Mr. Perry stated that he works for the Elections board but was not there on their behalf. He was there as a taxpayer and a citizen, and his concerns were with the renovation of the Recreation gym. He said he met with County Administrator Townsend and Commissioner Gilles last week regarding the bid and who is running or managing the project. Since then, he has had other questions that may need the attention of the board. Mr. Perry said that he was a builder in Forsyth County. He never did government work, but he did a lot of residential work with similar rules and regulations. Mr. Perry inquired about the date for opening the gym. Chairman Traylor said that no date had been set for the ribbon cutting. They were able to use it for voting but not for the use of the gym. Mr. Perry said that what originally got him involved was because of the heat situation during voting. He said the State published the "Guidebook for Local Government Construction Projects." This is a guideline for bidding projects and is based on state law. It gives details about contractors, subcontractors, and license requirements and inspections. Mr. Perry said that if they did not follow the book, they did not follow the

guidelines. He asked if there was a surety bond, or a scope of work when they put the project out to bid. He asked if payments were made on a draw. Were they made on schedules as work was completed? Were there inspections done? Was an electrical and roof inspection done? Mr. Perry said that all of these are legal requirements that should be done for any project, especially if it is a public building. Mr. Perry asked if the Fire Department inspected the gym for fire safety. Mr. Perry inquired about obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy. He said he had concerns because this will cost the taxpayers a lot of money.

Chairman Traylor said that this is a renovation process. He said that initially, they started out to buy a brand new metal building for a new gym. In the end, they were unable to purchase the new building. Then an initial projected cost was around \$1,500,000.00 to build a new gym, so instead County Administrator Townsend worked with the former board to renovate the current gym.

Mr. Perry said that his meeting with the County Administrator Townsend was good, and he was not there to throw him under the bus. Mr. Perry asked if they had hired a general contractor. Chairman Traylor answered that they did not use a general contractor; instead, they used County Administrator Townsend to oversee the project along with Maintenance Director Beverly. Chairman Traylor said that small cities are able to do renovations, such as the Women's Clubhouse and the Boys and Girls Club. When they are doing a renovation, such as the new Administration building, which costs around \$3,000,000.00, they hire a large contractor such as Hogan Construction. This particular gym renovation was unattainable, so the idea was to put more than a band-aid on it. Mr. Perry said that gym renovation is more than a band-aid, and most of the board members were not on the board last year and were not involved in the decision-making. Mr. Perry said this is a serious problem, and somewhere down the line, he hopes that a child does not get hurt and wondered if the County insurance would cover it. He said that no rules or inspections were followed, and this could be a liability issue.

Vice-Chair Thrash said that the plan initially was to put in new basketball goals and flooring. She noted that hindsight is 20/20, they have saved money by doing this renovation, but problems have come up, and they should not have caved to the pressures of some to renovate the current gym; they should have gone ahead, made it a project and built a new gym.

Mr. Perry said they should have hired an engineer to write up a scope of work to bid out the renovation with licenses, insurance surety bonds, and all the things required to renovate a public building. Chairman Traylor said that they would research the insurance issues.

Elaine Hallada of 131 Steeple Chase addressed the board. Mrs. Hallada said that she was there for the Recreation Department. She said her grandchildren go to school in Spalding County and are playing Recreation ball with Lamar County. Last year they played for the Lamar County Recreation Department. Mrs. Hallada said that on the first day of baseball, she found out how terrible the restrooms are at the Recreation Department. She found out it was not a budgeted item but said it should be considered a budgeted item. Last week her daughter-in-law, who is from New York, had her uncle visiting, and they watched the boys play baseball and then went to dinner. Her grandson, who plays baseball, told his uncle that before he comes to see his baseball game to have a good pee before he comes because those restrooms are nasty.

Mrs. Hallada said that as she watched the kids play ball, the coach told them to hop over the fence and take their whiz in the woods. She said that the kids do not want to use those restrooms. So, for future consideration, she asked them to clean up the restrooms because she did not even want to use them, and it was this way years ago when her older granddaughters played softball. Mrs. Hallada said another issue is that the lights are not very good when the kids play ball at night. She said that this needs to be another budget consideration.

Chairman Traylor said that they have been discussing the lighting. County Administrator Townsend said that in the new SPLOST budget, they have about \$1,200,000.00 budgeted for lights and around \$100,000.00 for new fencing. Commissioner Lovett asked Mrs. Hallada about what field she was referencing. Mrs. Hallada said she was referring to the field where the kids play baseball and softball. Commissioner Lovett said that the community raised a lot of funds for the new animal shelter and thought it would be a great idea if she would be willing to be involved in chairing a fundraiser for fixing the bathrooms at the Recreation Department. Commissioner Lovett requested that she speak to the Recreation Director. He said that he wanted the community to solve its own problems and asked if Mr. Perry would give her a ballpark figure as to what it would take to renovate the bathrooms. Mrs. Hallada said that the Recreation Department is the Barnesville-Lamar County Recreation Department and asked how much the City of Barnesville is contributing. Commissioner Lovett said he did not know, and he fights that battle with the co-mingling of services every single day, and he asked Mrs. Hallada to find out. He said that this should be a public record as to who gives what, and it should be in increments of thirds. Commissioner Lovett said that he is a private supporter of the Recreation Department, but he said he does not have a dog in this fight, but it is a very good place for the youth to get training for future life. Mrs. Hallada said that the facilities in Spalding County are so much nicer. Commissioner Lovett said that the population in Spalding County is much larger than Lamar County to help spread the cost. He asked Mrs. Hallada to come back to the next Board of Commissioner business meeting to give a report about the cost of fixing the restrooms. Commissioner Lovett said hiring a large contractor is extremely expensive, but most people working on the new Administration building live in the community. He said they might give their time to install new toilets, update the plumbing, or put in a divider wall.

Mrs. Hallada commented on the fire hydrants. She said that she knows someone where there is no water at a fire hydrant where they live and asked if they arrived at a fire and if it was dry what they would do. Fire Chief Matthews said that is why they have fire truck tankers that carry water. Mrs. Hallada said that the Republican Party tried to get the Lamar County Water Authority on a ballot to get it reinstated to help with the water issues, and she would like to see it on the next ballot. Commissioner Gilles responded that you can only put it on the ballot during a primary election, and the party has to vote on it. The Board of Commissioners has nothing to do with getting it on the ballot. Fire Chief Matthews said that the Recreation Department belongs to Lamar County, and the fire hydrants belong to the City of Barnesville. The City supplies the water to the hydrants. County Administrator stated that the Water Authority trade happened in 2011, the City has a money maker, and the County has all the expenses.

Mayor of Milner Kathy Buffington of 203 Liberty Hill Street, Milner, Georgia, present for the meeting, inquired about who owns the fire hydrants in the City of Milner. Fire Chief Matthews responded that the City of Milner owns them. She said that regarding the Fox Crossing Phase 3, it is imperative that an HOA is responsible for the runoff ponds. It is imperative that an HOA is created because she has an issue with an HOA, and according to the developer, there was no HOA ever created.

XI. Round Table

Chairman Traylor thanked those that supported the BBQ and Blues Festival.

Chairman Traylor recognized Thousand Hills Cattle Ranch for their award at the BBQ and Blues Festival.

Chairman Traylor requested that the residents of Lamar County continue to show love to their neighbors and people in the community.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business meeting at approximately 8:58 p.m. Vice-Chair Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Nancy Thrash, Vice-Chair

Jarrold Fletcher, Commissioner

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk