

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

April 8, 2024

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on April 8, 2024. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones, and Ed Newsome. Also present were Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, County Attorney Alex Shalishali, Deputy County Clerk Bristeria Clark, and other staff. The public and representatives of the media participated in person and via live streaming of the meeting on the County's Facebook page and the government public access channel.

After the invocation by Chairman Heard, he asked the Commission to review the minutes of the March 18th Regular Meeting and March 25th Work Session.

The Chairman recognized Coroner Michael Fowler to update the Commission on the 2024 Swim for Life program. Coroner Fowler shared his presentation and said that registration will be held on May 25th at the Riverfront Turtle Park starting at 10 am. He mentioned the partnerships for this event included Morehouse School of Medicine and Phoebe Network of Trust. He introduced the YMCA, ASU, Albany Recreation Department, and the Boys & Girls Clubs staff members present at the meeting.

The Chairman called for a recommendation from Juvenile Court to apply for a Criminal Justice Incentive Grant Program in the amount of \$410,000 for Functional Family Therapy use. This is an annual request for the 100% grant with no local match. Juvenile Court Judge Herbie Solomon addressed. Judge Solomon shared that this program was developed to create an intervention for families with behavioral substance problems. Upon a question by Commissioner Johnson, Judge Solomon said that classes were taught to juveniles throughout the functional family program.

The Chairman called for a recommendation from the Dougherty County Jail and Dougherty County Public Defender's Office to participate in the "My Justice Portal" pilot program. The "My Justice Portal" is an application that can be deployed on inmate tablets and enhances the quality, frequency, and confidentiality of inmate/attorney communication between the inmate and Public Defender's Office. The program anticipates reducing back-logged cases in the court system and the average length-of-stay for jail inmates. The cost of the program is \$136,464 and funding is available in SPLOST V. Grant funding is desired. The Public Safety Committee recommends the use of the application. Public Safety Committee Chairman Anthony Jones, Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, and Chief Jailer John Ostrander addressed. Chief Ostrander said that this program was designed to help facilitate communication between the Public Defenders and inmates. It was noted that the application will be on the existing tables where the Public Defenders would have the ability to communicate with the inmate electronically. If savings occurred after the first year, Chief Ostrander said that he would want to extend the use for additional years.

Commissioner Gaines wanted to make sure that we were maximizing the funds and asked that a comprehensive look be done. Commissioner Jones suggested that a grant administrator be hired to monitor federal grant funds. Commissioner Edwards asked that a survey be placed on the tablets to allow the inmates to provide feedback to measure the success of usage.

The Chairman called for a recommendation from the Dougherty County Jail and Dougherty County Public Defender's Office to apply for a Georgia Bar Foundation Grant in the amount of \$140,000 for the "My Justice Portal" pilot program. Approval of the grant application is requested to offset the cost of the program. Chief Jailer John Ostrander and Disaster Recovery and Grants, Program Manager, Harriet Hollis addressed. Ms. Hollis shared that her office was short-staffed and mentioned that she was working hard to serve in all the vacant roles. Upon a question by Commissioner Jones, Mr. Brooks mentioned that the regional team and Georgia Collier-Boiling were assisting with grant assistance. He added that the lobbyist team has taken the initiative to assist with weekly updates on various grants to see if Dougherty County meets the qualifications to apply.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with Albany Technical College on behalf of the Dougherty County Sheriff's Office authorizing assistance to each other during a local emergency. Chief Jailer John Ostrander addressed. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks was present. Chief Ostrander asked the Board to disregard this item.

Mr. Brooks shared information pertaining to sewer easements relative to the County-owned property across from the National Guard Armory between N. Jefferson and Monroe Street. He added that the City of Albany wanted the area to be viewed and easements approved so that work could be continued. Commissioner Edwards wanted to know if direction needed to be given to Mr. Brooks to hire a third-party grant writer to assist and solely focus on grants. Commissioner Johnson congratulated Commissioner Jones on his successful Financial Literacy Program graduation. Commissioner Gaines echoed the same sentiments of Commissioner Johnson and added that the citizens should view the eclipse if possible. She recognized Councilman Corey Morgan and SOWEGA Rising member Maggie Bell. Commissioner Jones thanked his colleagues for the accolades and asked for a moment of silence for County Clerk Ware and Deputy County Clerk Clark's family members who died. Chairman Heard shared that we need to consider the grant opportunities on a larger scale and look at other counties to see how they operated with grants based on the focused need for the area.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK