

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

August 29, 2022

The Dougherty County Commission met for a Special Called Meeting in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on August 29, 2022. Chairman Christopher Cohilas presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson and Anthony Jones. Also present were County Administrator Michael McCoy, Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison, County Attorney Alex Shalishali, County Clerk Jawahn Ware and other staff. Commissioner Ed Newsome participated via live stream. 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.

The Chairman called for approval of the August 1st Regular Meeting, August 5th Special Called Meeting, August 8th Work Session and August 8th Special Called Meeting.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. Under discussion, the unanimous approval was provided noting a change to the August 8, 2022 Special Called Meeting notifying a percentage of the SPLOST distribution instead of a dollar amount.

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing for a proposed tax increase to 19.069 mils for the County-Wide General Fund. The millage rate of 9.173 will remain the same for the Special Services District. William Wright, the representative for AFRAM Tech, Inc. spoke in opposition of the millage rate and provided concerns regarding the Commissioner's spending habits, use of other funds and the loss of population. Due to limited time, he said that he will come back to present additional information. Citizen Maggie Taylor opposed the millage rate and asked the Commission to consider families with one income and suggested this is not the best time to increase. Citizen Donna Bussey was a new citizen to the area and inquired about other alternatives that were considered prior to seeking an increase. Citizen Robert Lewis opposed the increase and suggested that a citizen oversight committee be utilized to review the government structures. He also shared that this action is considered to be a crisis management and negatively impacts senior citizens and suggested citizen buy-in. Commissioner Gray shared that the government budgets are available online. Commissioner Edwards asked if there can be a discussion on the next Work Session regarding an oversight committee. Chairman Cohilas shared that he will work with Mr. McCoy on the discussion of the suggestion. Commissioner Edwards also answered some of the salary concerns of the Commission for Ms. Bussey. There being no other individuals present in support of or opposition to the proposed tax public hearing, the Chairman closed the Public Hearing.

The Chairman called a recess from 10:25 a.m.-10:36 a.m. to accommodate the arrival of Judge Lockette.

The Chairman recognized Judge Willie Lockette to thank the Commission for support of a Superior Court Judgeship for the Dougherty Judicial Circuit and to address concerns. He shared that Dougherty County ranked number one in the state for needing an additional judgeship and he provided other statistics. He also shared that there will be operational costs to the County for an additional Judge in the amount of \$200,000. However, this offsets the cost plus more than having an inmate sit in jail awaiting processing. This will be cost-shifting from pretrial detention. He confirmed that we are losing population, but the number of violent crimes continues to increase. Chairman Cohilas asked that the Judge speak on the caseloads, staff vacancies, and potential positive impact of the pay study. Judge Lockette said that we have come to the reality that we have a district disadvantage on compensation and must look at a way to incentivize individuals because the pay is being doubled in other areas. Chairman Cohilas shared additional concerns and said that proactive ideas are being considered. Judge Lockette asked the Board to contact our Legislation because the Governor will have to sign granting final approval.

The Chairman recognized representatives from Sea Breeze Albany, LLC to provide an update and plans for 600 Holly Drive (formerly known as Paradise Village). Mr. Pat McKee shared information about a free application called “Tornadoe Free” that alerts you when you are in the path of a tornado. He also shared that his property name is changing and Pierce Point plans to change the polarity from low-income housing to moderate-income manufactured affordable housing. He shared pictures of the other complexes they own. He said that he plans to have 200 homes completed by the summer of 2023. Chris Brazell spoke on the infrastructure concerns.

The Chairman recognized Tammi Starkey, Senior Vice President, NFP Corporate Services to update the Commission on the 2023 Plan Benefit Renewals. Ms. Starkey said that the plan was doing tremendously well. Our claims for Covid expenses have reduced and are currently at \$800,000 whereas the previous year was over \$2 million. FY23 has a budget increase of \$343,000 which is 5.1%. There are no changes to the plan except to add a buy-up plan option for vision and increase the LTD max benefits to \$10,000. She also discussed that a new vendor for the clinic will be in place January 2023.

The Chairman recognized Jana Dyke, President & CEO Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission, to update the Commission with the quarterly report. Ms. Dyke provided an overview of the strategic plan that they started in 2019. She is striving to be proactive instead of reactive in business development. She mentioned that Chris Hatcher is the Chair for the EDC and said that she will be taking resumes for a business development position. She addressed questions of Commissioner Gaines to positively impact our tax digest.

The Chairman recognized William Wright, a representative for AFRAM Tech, Inc. to continue his update to the Commission on the Federal Reserve Bank Loan, Mainstreet Lending Program and Entrepreneur Academy. Mr. Wright suggested that the area become a destination area. He also reviewed the information presented previously on the Main Street New Loan Facility.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution authorizing the execution of the amended Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Albany for the 2022 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in the amount of \$21,347.20. The Agreement stipulates that the County will receive 20% of the total award (\$106,737). The grant award increased after the Commission's approval in the July 18, 2022 Regular Meeting. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed. Mr. McCoy shared that the grant increased by \$737 for the county.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Johnson, the motion passed unanimously. Resolution 22-039 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE AND
EXECUTION OF AN AMENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF ALBANY AND DOUGHERTY
COUNTY RELATIVE TO A 2022 BYRNE JUSTICE ASSISTANCE (JAG)
PROGRAM AWARD; REPEALING RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF
RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT HEREWITH;
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution declaring the listed vehicles and equipment as surplus and authorizing the disposal of or sale of same via an online auction. Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison was present.

Commissioner Gray moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Johnson, the motion passed unanimously. Resolution 22-040 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION DECLARING AS SURPLUS THE ATTACHED VEHICLES;
PROVIDING THE DISPOSAL OF OR SALE OF SAME VIA AN ONLINE
AUCTION; REPEALING PRIOR RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT; AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution providing for the approval of the 2022 Millage Rates for the County-Wide General Fund, Special Services District Fund, Dougherty County School System and State of Georgia.

Commissioner Gray moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed with four ayes and three nays by Commissioner Edwards, Commissioner Johnson, and Commissioner Gaines. Resolution 22-041 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION ASSESSING THE RATE OF TAXATION FOR
COUNTY PURPOSES ON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY IN
DOUGHERTY COUNTY, GEORGIA AND ON ALL TAXABLE
PROPERTY IN THE SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT OF DOUGHERTY
COUNTY, GEORGIA FOR 2022; REPEALING PRIOR RESOLUTIONS
OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES.

Mr. McCoy reminded the Board that in observance of the Labor Day Holiday, there will be no meeting on Monday, September 5, 2022. The next meeting will be a Work Session on Monday, September 12, 2022.

Commissioner Edwards shared a concern about employees not having a recourse (appeal) in reference to the pay study concerns. Mr. McCoy shared that the appeal time had ended. Commissioner Edwards said that it needed to be a “sweet spot” because there is a disparity between employees with longevity and new employees. Mr. McCoy shared that a contractor was hired to manage the process and Chairman Cohilas requested that employees with concerns contact Mr. McCoy. Commissioner Jones stated his concern regarding the millage rates. He said that we knew about this needed increase in 2017 but we did not communicate well with the citizens. He also expressed the importance of this and how Dougherty County has been good steward, noting we are one of the few areas to remain debt free. He added that we all are caught in the worldwide inflation bubble.

After comments, Commissioner Edwards said that he is now in favor of the millage rate increase. However, Chairman Cohilas shared that the vote is closed but he appreciated the sentiments. Commissioner Gaines wanted options for an ordinance on how to address debris left from homes (alluding to evictions). She wanted steps on a briefing referencing the property for options. Chairman Cohilas also directed Attorney Shalishali to look at an ordinance. Commissioner Gaines said the Board should address what was done to mitigate increasing the millage rate. She also said that she was not sure why Pay Study B was implemented in which she is not criticizing the Board or staff, but she feels that she did not do enough. Commissioner Johnson spoke about the vote for the millage rate and expressed his concerns about the distribution and media release of the transition guide (for the new

Chairman). Commissioner Gray stated that he appreciated the evolution of the resource guide that was given to the Commission (by Mrs. Ware) and it is still evolving to help people coming on board. He added that he understood that the Board had to make a hard decision [pertaining to the millage rate]. A very lengthy conversation ensued about moving forward. Chairman Cohilas gave pointed comments regarding the millage rate and concerns regarding disparity.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK