

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

November 13, 2023

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on November 13, 2023. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 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, County Clerk Jawahn Ware 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 October 16th Regular Meeting and October 30th Work Session Minutes.

The Chairman recognized the Board of Tax Assessors Chairman, William Ashberry and Interim Chief Appraiser, Larry Thoms to provide an update on the Assessors' Office. Mr. Ashberry shared that Adam Bridges has served well as the Assistant Chief Appraiser and the Board was ready to promote him to the Chief Appraiser role. Once he is in the role, the Board will seek an Assistant Chief Appraiser. Larry Thomas will continue to complete the cell tower revaluation. Mr. Thomas gave an update on other department and assessment concerns, followed by answering questions of the Commission. The 2026 total revaluation has started and is expected to be completed for the tax year 2026. The County is completing a total revaluation because our assessment ratios fall outside the compliance range based on State guidelines. He explained the rationale and stressed that Dougherty County was not the only entity undergoing the same process. Mr. Thomas shared staffing challenges throughout the state, noting that some are outsourcing. Other Commissioners voiced their concerns.

The Chairman recognized City Commissioner Jon Howard to invite the Board to visit areas in East Albany on November 14, 2023 to examine and discuss poverty in Ward 1. Commissioner Gaines urged citizen Bruce Capps, who has an interest in poverty, to work with Commissioner Howard. Commissioner Jones encouraged that action after the tour be done. Commissioner Howard shared the plans to include involving stakeholders.

The Chairman called for a discussion of the zoning application for Kevon Douglas, owner and applicant, (23-074) request to rezone approximately 2.16 acres from R-2 (Single-Family Residential) to C-3 (Commercial District). The rezoning would allow for the parking of a semi-truck. The property is at 1306 Lily Pond Road. The Planning Commission recommended denial. Angel Gray, Deputy Planning Director addressed. The Public Hearing and Action on this item are scheduled for the November 20, 2023 Regular Meeting. Upon a question by Commissioner Edwards, Mrs. Gray clarified the Zoning Board's vote and the process of tabling, denial, and withdrawal. She also addressed his questions pertaining to an unrelated property. After clarity

was sought from Commissioner Gray's comments, Mrs. Gray shared that the Board could add conditions if desired.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept a US Department of Transportation Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Planning and Demonstration Grant (#20.939) in the amount of \$263,000. The joint city and county application requires a 20% local match of \$52,600, with Dougherty County being responsible for \$26,300. The federal portion of the grant is \$210,400. Funding will be provided from TSPLOST II. The Commission approved the grant application in the June 5, 2023 Regular Meeting. Planning Director Paul Forgey addressed. Mr. Forgey outlined the process for Commissioner Jones and clarified that we were in the grant acceptance stage. He stressed that the Commissioners and stakeholders should be involved to list areas of concern.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept a Judicial Council of Georgia Ad Hoc Committee on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Grant in the amount of \$492,690 on behalf of Superior Court. The funding will be used to update the audio/visual equipment in three courtrooms and the jury assembly room. This is a 100% refundable grant with no local match required. The Commission approved the grant application in the March 20, 2023 Regular Meeting. Judicial Assistant Candee Nix addressed.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to renew the Mutual Aid Agreement with the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) on behalf of the Dougherty County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department providing reciprocal support in the event of any natural and/or man-made crisis. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed. EMS Director Sam Allen was present. Mr. Brooks shared that this was a renewal similar to those with our law enforcement. Commissioner Gaines asked Mr. Brooks and Attorney Shalishali to consider there being one agreement with the Base. Commissioner Gray voiced a concern and the gentlemen agreed to review. Commissioner Jones asked that an agreement be sought for fire protection.

The Chairman called for a discussion of the Commission's Legislative Priorities to be presented at the Annual Meeting with the State Delegation. Commissioner Gray stressed that ACCG priorities be voiced highlighting the EMS reimbursement billing and state inmate reimbursement. Commissioner Newsome shared that we need to prioritize our asks. Commissioner Johnson requested funding for Putney and Radium Springs parks, Westtown Library and the 4th Judge. Commissioner Gray added that the process should start now for an ask for a new Judicial Building.

Commissioner Edwards echoed the sentiments of Commissioner Newsome by adding that we need to review our projects. Commissioner Johnson shared that GDOT should be thanked for some of the updates they have made and noted some concerns about lighting throughout the County. He suggested that we consider creating a Trail Authority. Commissioner Gaines asked for an update on Westtown, and the bookmobile and inquired about the lost costs of EMS. Commissioner Jones responded to her question pertaining to the library. She also asked for an update from GDOT about the intersection of Lily Pond and Newton Road. She shared that this needed to be a safer intersection and mentioned the area was on the transportation plan. Mr. Brooks said that he would provide an update on funding for the remaining portion of the trails. Commissioner Jones

restressed interest in a mutual aid agreement with the Marine Corps Logistic Base to ideally reduce ISO ratings in the unincorporated area, especially District 6.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 11: 16 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK