

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION  
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

July 25, 2022

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on July 25, 2022. Chairman Christopher Cohilas presided and called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones and Ed Newsome. County Administrator Michael McCoy, Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison, County Attorney Alex Shalishali, County Clerk Jawahn Ware and other staff were also present. The public and representatives of the media participated in person via live streaming of the meeting on the County's Facebook page and the government public access channel. County Attorney Spencer Lee was absent.

The Chairman asked the Commission to review the minutes of the July 11th Regular Meeting and July 11th Work Session.

The Chairman opened the SPLOST VIII public hearing and Mr. William Wright spoke about his concerns. He said that SPLOST was never intended to be forever and the County should be growing the tax digest. He added that the County still has money from SPLOST IV which has not been used but [citizens] are still being for additional money, therefore [the County is] acting upon greed and not need. He plans to provide written documentation on suggested projects and needs for the Commission's review and consideration. There being no further discussion, the public hearing was closed.

The Chairman recognized HR Director Dominique Hall to update the Commission on the recent job fair. Ms. Hall said that 70 individuals attended, 44 applications were completed and that this was the largest turnout in a single day this year. She added that she will continue to work with community partners in posting jobs and shared other marketing plans. She said that we have about 135 vacancies out of over 600 positions. Other questions and suggestions were posed by the Board.

The Chairman recognized Albany Technical College Director of the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Grant, Michelle Williams to inform the community of the Rebuild Southwest Grant that allows individuals to go to school for free. Ms. Williams said that about \$8.3 million was awarded from 2018 Hurricane Michael and those funds can be used for 20 counties for low and moderate-income individuals who cannot get financial aid. Those who are looking to obtain certificates and are not Pell grant eligible and those with bachelors that have lost jobs because of the storms are eligible. Currently, this grant is not limited for a specific program but individuals must be an applicant of the college. Suggestions on how to partner with the Dougherty County Human Resources department were discussed. Only three years are remaining with the grant. She was asked to provide information to the County's Public Information Officer Wendy Howell. Suggestions of partnering entities and individuals were provided.

The Chairman called for the millage rate recommendation from the Finance Committee. Finance Committee Chairman Ed Newsome and Financial Advisor Edmund Wall addressed. Upon the request of Commissioner Johnson, prior the presentation, Commissioner Newsome shared that the Finance Committee vote on the recommendation was 2-1 with Commissioner Johnson voting against the millage rate increase proposal. Mr. Wall explained the impact inflation is having on the community which in turn impacted the millage rate. Suggestions of other revenue sources were provided and it was said that creating a special tax district is not advantageous. The commuter tax implemented in New York is discouraged because it may deter individuals moving to the area. The Landfill Franchise fees were discussed, and it was suggested money due from the General Fund be written off because funds were not available. A resolution from Attorney Shalishali will be presented per the request of Commissioner Gray to ensure that the closure costs are restricted to prevent accidental spending (currently in the amount of \$8.5 million). The suggested solution is to implement a 10% franchise fee on the Solid Waste Fund. This will project about \$468,199 a year in income. The landfill fund is healthy and it can afford to pay a franchise fee and has no debt.

A schedule of rates for tipping fees will be presented later by Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison. The proposed mil increases for the next years were discussed. If no action is taken, our reserves will drop to 15 days which means the County will need to borrow money for payroll in the summer months and it will harm the County's credit rating. Mr. McCoy clarified for Commissioner Gaines that all positions are still funded even if there are vacancies. Commissioner Gaines questioned if the County is providing services at a level we can afford. Mr. McCoy shared that expenditures have been thoroughly reviewed and addressed additional concerns. There is no millage rate increase proposed for the Special Services District. Mr. Wall summarized that we have a budget that we will have to pay for, either with a millage rate increase or our savings. He told Commissioner Edwards that the rate does not have to be set by August 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. McCoy shared that the setting of the millage rate must be done every year and there may be a delay. Mr. McCoy also provided an update that the staff gave in the Finance Committee Meeting pertaining to tipping fees. Commissioner Jones suggested that consolidation be considered. Commissioner Johnson asked Mr. Wall, as our financial consultant, to work aggressively to ensure that our employees are paid adequately in advance. Commissioner Newsome concurred and shared that we cannot be in the predicament that we have been in the past. Mr. Wall discussed the increase in other local governments and noted that one increased their rate 30%. It was also mentioned by Commissioner Johnson that he did not support the increase of 3.5 mil but would a 4.5 mil increase. The Chairman said that he understood the reasoning for possibly proceeding with the 4.5 mil increase because it would potentially keep the Commission from coming back next year for another increase.

The Chairman recognized Tax Director Shonna Josey and Chief Appraiser Joseph McPherson to discuss the Certified 2022 Tax Digest for the Countywide M&O and Special Services District. Board of Tax Assessors Chairman William Ashberry and Vice Chairman Larry Thomas were present. Mrs. Josey presentation was based on the 3.5 mil increase. The net parcel count for the 2022 Countywide M&O is 37,815. The net personal property M&O assessed value is 309,228,158 and will levy \$5,896,672. The net real property M&O assessed value is 1,699,829,169 and will levy \$32,414,042. The net M&O assessed value for all properties is 2,043,158,820 and would levy \$38,960,996. The total taxes levied to include the

Forest Land Protection Reimbursement (FLPA) and PILOT is \$41,287,800. The Homestead & Property Exemptions and Summary were reviewed. The proposed notices for advertisements and the 5-year history of levy were shared. Questions of the Board were answered. For the 2022 Digest for the Special Services District, the parcel count is 9,330. The presentation is based on the recommendation to keep the millage rate the same from 2021 at 9.173. The net personal property M&O assessed value is 49,221,933 and will levy revenues of taxes of \$451,512. The net real property M&O assessed value is 523,933,270 and will levy revenues of taxes of \$4,806,040. The net M&O assessed value for all properties is 588,033,437 and would levy \$5,393,755. The total taxes levied include FLPA, the P&G PILOT, and the 20-year Bio-green PILOT and the estimated Dougherty County Solar is \$6,120,741. The Homestead & Property Exemptions and Summary were reviewed. The proposed notices for advertisements and the 5-year history of levy were shared. There being no questions pertaining to the Special Services District, the 2022 Tax Digest processing timeline was shared. Mrs. Josey stated that the latest [date] advertisements can be submitted is August 2, 2022.

The Chairman called for a discussion to renew the service agreement with Ambulance Medical Billing (AMB), (Paducah, Kentucky) for EMS billing. Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison addressed. EMS Director Sam Allen was present. The Chairman added that the company has been performing services and the department is pleased.

The Chairman called for a discussion to amend the Fiscal Year 2023 ARPA budget and the Fiscal Year 2023 budgets to include the implementation of the Pay Study Option B for the General Fund, Special Services District and the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. County Administrator Michael McCoy and Finance Director Martha Hendley were present to address. Chairman Cohilas stated that the item will be removed from the agenda to allow staff to make recommendations based on today's discussion.

The Chairman called for a discussion of the revised SPLOST VIII proposed projects. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed. Mr. McCoy shared that the changes were previously mentioned and that the budget is still \$36,000,000 and he will be working with the City Manager because time is of the essence. Chairman Cohilas shared Commissioner Johnson's suggestion to have a line item for the joint recreation projects. Chairman Cohilas also mentioned that the vast majority of our funding is proposed to be spent inside of the City. He then discussed the tier funding and what is the top priority. Mr. McCoy said that he was waiting on the Board's direction on how to proceed

Commissioner Gray left at 12:53 pm.

Commissioner Johnson shared that there is a lot of duplication of projects on both lists and shared that there should be a category for intentional projects. Chairman Cohilas asked the County Administrator and County Attorney to research and determine the flexibility available in SPLOST for projects and work with the City of Albany.

The Chairman called a discussion to have the Chairman notify the City of Albany of the County's position relative to the Negotiation of the Special Local Option Sales Tax VIII proceeds. The recommendation is to keep the distribution the same percentage split of 64%

City and 36% County. Chairman Christopher Cohilas and Commissioners discussed. County Administrator Michael McCoy was present. Action on this item was scheduled in the following Special Called Meeting. There was unanimous consent to proceed.

Attorney Shalishali was asked to introduce himself and provide comments. He shared that he has been in contact with Attorney Lee and they will work together. Commissioner Gaines shared her thank you card received from Rolling Hills Subdivision for the Commission's clean-up from the storms, alley paving, and other projects. She also shared the passing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> child of CB King and mentioned some of Mr. King's accomplishments. Commissioner Edwards asked about the status of the update on the Coroner's office and the status of the conceptual drawings from Ron Huffman. Mr. McCoy said the presentation of Mr. Huffman will be in August. Commissioner Johnson asked when will employees understand their actual increase because the Commission is getting calls because employees are concerned. Mr. McCoy shared that it will be sent to the department managers mid-next week. Commissioner Johnson asked that the Commission be notified as well. Commissioner Gaines questioned how a projected cost was provided but numbers are still being produced. Mr. McCoy shared that projections were received from the consultant and this is how figures were provided. He added that the plan adopted is now a pay range and no longer steps; and the consultant is proposing new salaries for each employee. Mr. McCoy had shared that the staff was prepared if Option A was selected. Chairman Cohilas concluded and shared the rising concern of monkeypox in the United States and asked Mr. McCoy to schedule a presentation by Dr. Ruis.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK