

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

August 21, 2023

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on August 21, 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, Ed Newsome, and Anthony Jones. 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 and Pledge of Allegiance by the Chairman, he called for approval of the minutes for the July 17th Regular Meeting, July 31st Work Session, July 31st Joint Meeting with the City of Albany and July 31st Special Called Meeting.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gray, the minutes were unanimously approved.

The Chairman opened the public hearing for the proposed tax increase of .57% for the County-Wide Digest and the proposed tax increase of .17% for the Special Services Digest. The millage rates remain the same as last year. The County-Wide millage rate is 19.069 and the Special Services millage rate is 9.1730. There being no individuals present in support of or opposition to the proposed tax public hearing, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

The Chairman recognized Jana Dyke, President & CEO, Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission (EDC), to provide the quarterly update. Ms. Dyke thanked the Board for their commitment to SPLOST and TSPLOST. She mentioned that two businesses, Grudem, an automotive supplier, and Diamond Door Products, were coming to the County. She added that both of the businesses were fully taxable and said that a film was made in the area but more information would be disclosed at a later time. She shared initiatives implemented for existing businesses and provided an update on some activities of the Payroll Development Authority (PDA). She asked the Board to contact her if they had any concerns regarding the economic incentives that are being considered at the state level. Ms. Dyke said that she would like to partner with the City of Albany and Dougherty County to be a conduit for grant purposes, as long as MOUs are in place, but she would like to have a conversation with the Chairman to discuss more. Unrelated to Ms. Dyke's presentation, Commissioner

Jones had questions pertaining to the funding of the Radium Springs Watershed. Commissioner Johnson will provide an update about the fund distribution. Other questions from the Board were answered, and the EDC's new Operations Manager Aarron Hart was introduced.

The Chairman opened the public hearing for Vincente S. Sontay, owner and applicant (23-039) request for special approval to construct a Religious Institution (church) at 1416 Nelms Road. The property is zoned R-2 (Single-Family Residential District) and would allow a Religious Institution by special approval. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Angel Gray, Deputy Planning Director addressed. It was confirmed by the Marshall's Office that the proposed site exceeded the measurements required by law for the commercial businesses that currently hold alcohol licenses. Attorney Joseph Dent confirmed that all ten criteria had been met and there were no legal requirements to deny the request. Engineer Tod Lanier will be responsible for creating specifications and confirmed that there will be no cemetery onsite as requested in the past. He shared if the Board would like to add that "there is no cemetery" in the conditions, the applicant does not object. Commissioner Jones stated his concerns by sharing that the citizens in the area were opposed and are not in favor of the religious institution.

Citizen Benny Porter was opposed to the location being in a residential area. He questioned the time frame of the application being presented to the Board. The County Attorney confirmed that the applicant had withdrawn the request. Citizen Edna Kincheloe was opposed and she felt as if the citizens should have a say regarding approval or denial. Willie Williams, President of the Putney Neighborhood Watch, was opposed and had others that were in the audience and opposed to the application to stand. He added that they were concerned about safety. Attorney Dent was allowed to provide a rebuttal and he emphasized to Commissioner Jones that the criteria have been set for the Board to assess that there is no impact on public health, safety and welfare. Commissioner Jones restated his comments and added that religious institutions should not be in a subdivision. Lastly, he mentioned his concerns that it may be problematic for individuals if the community is opposed and stated two specific concerns pertaining to the criteria that the Board has to consider. He questioned future expansion of the church and stressed that the citizens are the ones that "drive the train of government." There being no one present to speak in favor or against the proposed matter, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

The Chairman called for consideration to accept the quote replacing the flooring of the main building for Public Works by the lowest responsive and responsible vendor meeting specifications, Custom Interiors (Leesburg, GA) in the amount of \$31,055.65. Funding is available in SPLOST VII.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Edwards, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from Finance to adjust the SPLOST VII Budget that was approved in the June 5, 2023 Regular Meeting. The approved line item for SPVII Government Center was initially \$955,000. The amount for the line item should have been \$305,000. The difference of \$650,000 is requested to add a budget of \$400,000 for the Festival of Springs Fountain and \$250,000 for the replacement chiller in the Judicial Building.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gaines, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from Finance to amend the FY 2024 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Fund. The request is made on behalf of Superior Court Judge Willie Lockette to transfer \$163,000 from the ADR Fund Balance to cover planned expenditures for the Dougherty Judicial ADR Program. The amendment will allocate \$100,000 to the Mediation/Arbitration line item and \$63,000 to the Coordinator line item.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Newsome, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration the resolution providing for the appointment of Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks to serve as the County Legislative Coordinator (CLC) to the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). This appointment will replace former appointee Michael McCoy.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gaines, the motion for approval passed unanimously. Resolution 23-039 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED

A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF
ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR BARRY BROOKS TO
SERVE AS THE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE COORDINATOR TO THE
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF GEORGIA;
REPEALING RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN
CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the nomination for the County Voting Delegate at the ACCG Legislative Conference Business Session on October 12, 2023 in Jekyll Island.

Upon nomination by Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Russell Gray was unanimously appointed to serve as the Dougherty County Voting Delegate.

The Chairman called for consideration the special approval request of Vincente S. Sontay, owner and applicant (23-039) to construct a Religious Institution (church) at 1416 Nelms Road. The property is zoned R-2 (Single-Family Residential District) and would allow a Religious Institution by Special Approval. The Planning Commission recommended approval.

Commissioner Jones moved to deny the special approval request. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion to deny. There being no further discussion, the motion to deny passed with five ayes and two nays by Commissioners Johnson and Gaines.

Mr. Brooks said that the Public Works Department would like to meet with the Public Works Committee regarding the traffic calming policy and possible revisions to the procedures and provisions.

Commissioner Gaines recognized her family members who were in the audience and who had participated in the March on Washington and shared that they will participate in the 60th Anniversary local event. Commissioner Jones read the card that he received from NACo as an ambassador.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK