

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

June 24, 2024

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on June 24, 2024. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones, and Ed Newsome. Also present were Acting 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 minutes of the June 3rd Regular Meeting and June 10th Work Session.

The Chairman recognized Angela S. Calhoun, Assistant to the Interim City Manager to share the Partnership Powerhouse Initiative with the Board. Bridget Bennett with Georgia Tech Accelerator, and Dr. Antonius Pegues, Albany State University Vice President of Finance and Administration were also present. An overview of Partnership Powerhouse was provided. The initiative was established in February 2024 and has a diverse team of local, state, federal, and private organizations. The mutual goal is to create a collaborative and resourceful platform to increase supplier diversity in the local community. Another goal is to empower minority and disadvantaged businesses to achieve contract awards. The first event will be held at the Civic Center on June 27, 2024. For the City and County, in fiscal year 2023, there were 68 total contract awards with nine reflecting a 7% award to minority contractors. The national average is 10%. However, 57% of the awards were local to Albany, GA. The listing of participating stakeholders and resource agencies was shared. Questions and concerns of the Board were addressed. The Board requested that the solicitation numbers of the County exclusively be shared. Mr. Brooks mentioned the practices that the County was beginning to utilize to track data. Commissioner Edwards suggested ideas for true collaboration and partnership (i.e. shared application and bid sharing). Ms. Calhoun shared additional plans of the initiative to include quarterly meetings, a collaborative website, workshops, etc.

The Chairman recognized Angelia Jones, Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, to update the Board on their request to suggest locations to place markers in the Black Historic District and identify areas described in W.E.B. DuBois' book, "The Souls of Black Folk" pertaining to Dougherty County. Ms. Jones provided electronic and printed materials regarding the Albany Dougherty County Black Historic District. This included a brief history, summary, and suggested narrative markers and streets. It was noted that Mt. Zion Church is Dougherty County's first and only nationally listed property on the National Register. Comments were provided by the Board, especially commending her for the foundational work done. She stressed that the focus is on the diversity of our area. Ms. Jones continued the presentation by discussing

what Author DuBois noted while in our area in 1898. It was revealed that additional references to Dougherty County were commonly noted in “The Crisis Magazine.” She shared that many writers would change the names of people and locations to protect identities; and especially during this time in history for safety. Her presentation revealed the true identities referenced in the writings. Commissioner Edwards suggested that Ms. Jones work with our PIO for assistance with printing and suggested a form of compensation similar to the Planning Commission for her work. She also provided accolades to Mrs. Rachelle Minx for laying the foundation for this project many years ago but noted the project was not started.

The Chairman recognized citizen Yaz Johnson to discuss his concern with the Commission. Mr. Johnson showed a picture of where there was an overgrowth of vegetation on their property from the Riverdale Subdivision. Information pertaining to a cemetery in Dougherty County was shared. The body of Simeon Brinson was there, and the City of Brinson had a post office named after him. Mr. Johnson requested speed bumps in the area near Twin Flowers Road. The request was to have the kudzu removed and Commissioner Edwards asked that the County Administrator and the Forestry Commission be involved. He also said that he asked Mr. Johnson to come because it was timely for the Board to discuss historical factors. Lastly, Commissioner Edwards mentioned that Mr. Johnson could get an application for a calming device from Public Works. Commissioner Jones provided insight on how to address the first concern noting that the Forestry Commission should not be involved. The Chairman directed the Attorney to work with Mr. Brooks to determine the legal action that can be taken. Commissioner Gray also suggested that our new vegetation ordinance be reviewed to determine if it could be utilized. Deputy Director Angel Gray addressed aspects of due process and Commissioner Gray left the meeting at 11:37 a.m. Ms. Jones reminded the Board that special cleaning tactics were required to be used to not alter the marker or historical significance.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to accept the annual Cooperative Agreement with Turner Job Corps Center and Dougherty County outlining the assistance of the Dougherty County Police Department in performing law enforcement duties. Chief Kenneth Johnson addressed.

The Chairman called for the continued presentation and review of the proposed FY 2025 Budgets as recommended by the Finance Committee. Finance Committee Chairman Clinton Johnson, Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks, and Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld addressed. Finance provided additional information pertaining to our revenue projections. Mr. Brooks said at this time, there was no projection to increase the millage rate. The proposal was to keep it flat. However, he noted how public hearings may be required if the rate is deemed as a rollback. He reemphasized that there have been no additional changes in the budget and there will be more discussion by Davenport. There was a reminder from Commissioner Johnson that we were seeking budget adoption and later addressing millage.

Commissioner Edwards requested that changes be made to the alley paving for the 200 block of Hibiscus and Red Bud Road. He noted that the split jurisdiction between the City of Albany and Dougherty County. Mr. Brooks asked Public Works Director Chuck Mathis to follow up. Commissioner Gaines gave kudos to Mr. Brooks and Public Works for placing rumble strips in the area of Hardup and Wildfair Road.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK