

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

December 4, 2023

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on December 4, 2023. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. due to technical difficulties. 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 and Pledge of Allegiance by the Chairman, he called for approval of the minutes of the November 6th Regular Meeting, November 13th Work Session and November 13th Special Called Meeting.

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

The Chairman recognized Walter Kelley, Library Board of Trustees Chairman and Gail Evans, Library Director, to provide their Annual Report. Mr. Kelley shared that overall, they were under budget and there were no complaints received for the library system. They had a very productive year and some of the data shared included 186,046 items circulated, 28,215 computer sessions held and rental fees in the amount of \$81,588 were collected. It was noted that this money returns to the County. Mr. Kelley and Mrs. Evans thanked the Board for their support and for the letters written to our Senators requesting funding for the Westtown Library. Mrs. Evans shared many of the new services which included Kanopy, a streaming service, a grant to acquire Chromebooks, a partnership with the Department of Human Services to allow their clients to renew their services, and a partnership with GEAR UP, which is through the Dougherty County School System and allows students to simulate testing for college entrance exams. The bookmobile is forecasted to arrive in December 2024. She shared other great news to include hosting the State Library Director's meeting. Several questions and comments were posed by the Board. Library Board of Trustees Treasurer Dr. Brenda Hodges-Tiller was recognized for being in attendance.

The Chairman recognized Margaret Holbrook, Interim County Extension Coordinator to update the Commission on staffing and Dougherty County 4-H representatives who thanked the Commission for their support. Ms. Holbrook shared that the students were not present because they were involved with end of the year exams. It is planned that some of the winners from the upcoming competitions will present to the Board at a later date. The new

Agriculture and Natural Resource County Agent, Vivek Bist was introduced. He is a published author from Nepal and has extensive experience in Agriculture (Ag) Economics. Family and Consumer Science County Agent Anna Grace Peebles and 4-H Educator Rachel Knight were also in attendance.

The Chairman recognized Leslie Lamb, South Regional Care Coordinator, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, to provide an update on child trafficking. She shared that the organization has been in existence since 2020. She defined how children were being exploited and noted that in 35 months, 1448 cases were reported, with the youngest case she personally worked being seven weeks old. Other statistics were provided and she said how referrals can be provided. Ms. Lamb walked the Board through the process of response and noted that Dougherty County is below the average with 14 cases.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution providing for the acceptance and execution of the contract for Audio Visual Modernization for Superior Court from the most responsive and responsible proposer S&L Integrated (Thomasville, GA) in the amount of \$492,254.76 subject to execution by the Chief Superior Court Judge. Three proposals were evaluated. Funding will be provided by the Judicial Council of Georgia Ad Hoc Committee on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Grant that the Commission accepted on behalf of Superior Court in the November 13, 2023 Special Called Meeting. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, City of Albany Buyer Rickey Gladney, and Judicial Assistant Candee Nix were present.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gray, the motion for approval passed unanimously. Resolution 23-058 is entitled:

**A RESOLUTION  
ENTITLED**

**A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROCUREMENT RECOMMENDATION FOR THE SERVICES BETWEEN DOUGHERTY COUNTY AND S&L INTEGRATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PERFORMING AUDIOVISUAL MODERNIZATION SERVICES FOR THE SUPERIOR COURT OF DOUGHERTY COUNTY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$492,254.76; REPEALING RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

The Chairman called for consideration the recommendation to rescind the purchase of two 2022 F-350 Cab & Chassis with an Ambulance Prep Package and Patient Module from Wade Ford (Smyrna, GA) in the amount of \$158,289 each for a total expenditure of \$316,578. The initial purchase was made from the State of Georgia Contract and approved in the April 4, 2022 Regular Meeting with funding to be provided by SPLOST VII. The vendor confirmed that the order was not placed and is unable to provide an anticipated order and delivery date. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed this issue and the following two related items. EMS Director Sam Allen was present.

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

The Chairman called for consideration the recommendation to rescind the purchase of two 2023 F-550 Cab & Chassis with Ambulance Prep Package and Patient Module from state contract vendor Wade Ford (Smyrna, GA) for the EMS Department in the amount of \$208,724 each for a total expenditure of \$417,448. The initial purchase was approved in the April 3, 2023 Regular Meeting with funding to be provided by SPLOST VII. The vendor confirmed that the order was not placed and is unable to provide an anticipated order and delivery date.

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

The Chairman called for consideration the recommendation to purchase two 2023 Chevy Type III Ambulances in the amount of \$222,761 each and one 2023 Ford Type III Ambulance in the amount of \$225,936 from Custom Truck and Body Works (Woodbury, GA) for the EMS Department for a total expenditure of \$671,458. Custom Truck and Body Works is the vendor that provides the manufacturing of the current fleet of ambulances. Funding is budgeted in SPLOST VII.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gray, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution declaring the listed vehicles as surplus and authorizing the disposal of or sale of same via an online auction. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gray, the motion for approval passed unanimously. Resolution 23-059 is entitled:

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

The Chairman called for consideration of the proposed board appointment.

Upon nominaton by Commissioner Johnson, applicant Lawrence Knighton was unanimously appointed to the Southwest Georgia Housing Task Force for a one-year term ending December 31, 2024. The incumbent did not desire reappointment.

The Chairman called for consideration of the lump sum distribution in the amount of \$1,000 per full time employee and \$500 per part time employee for a total distribution with taxes in the amount of \$684,116, for those in our position count as of December 1, 2023. Distributions will be made on December 15, 2023. Funding will be provided from the General Fund (\$620,602), Special Services District (\$45,213), and the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (\$18,301). Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks was present.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded. Under discussion Commissioner Gray shared concerns that the Finance Committee did not review the request. He stated that it is County's practice to support staff and listed the measures taken in the past, but cautioned the Board to reconsider passing the motion. He noted that inflation is still real and our revenues are down. Commissioner Gray shared that our digest only increased by \$900,000 but the County has a budget liability increase of \$2.5 million. He is concerned that next year, if this is implemented, the County may be looking at furloughs, hiring freezes, or other measures. He does not believe we are in a strong enough financial position to proceed. Commissioner Johnson confirmed inflation is valid and clarified that there were some previous actions made on the same day. Commissioner Johnson stated that the request is affordable and the Finance Committee did review, despite the process [of approval] was different. Commissioner Gray believed that the Finance Committee did not have the opportunity to drill down into the budget to confirm that it is affordable and the best use of our funds at this time. Commissioner Edwards added that the topic had been discussed for over a month and this vote being made in public supports county staff and open government, noting that the correct procedure was followed. Commissioner Gaines was in favor of the method used because it is a one time expense and will not be recurring, unless the Board desires. There being no further discussion, the motion passed with six ayes and one nay by Commissioner Gray.

Mr. Brooks reminded the Board that the Commission was scheduled to tour the Albany State University portion of the trails immediately following the Executive Session. He noted that a ribbon cutting will be planned in the new year and he provided an update on the security camera project for the downtown campus area.

Commissioner Gaines noted that one of her constituents, Mrs. Eunice Lawrence, was celebrating her 101 year birthday. The Chairman suggested that a proclamation be done and the Attorney shared that Mrs. Lawrence was recognized for her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and said another can be done. Commissioner Gaines asked Mr. Brooks to review the historical sales tax.

The Chairman called for consideration the recommendation from the County Attorney to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation and then to adjourn.

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

There being no further discussion, the Board entered into Executive Session at 11:52 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK