

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

December 5, 2022

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on December 5, 2022. Chairman Christopher Cohilas presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Anthony Jones and Ed Newsome. Commissioner Russell Gray participated via the audio-conferencing feature. Also present were County Administrator Michael McCoy, 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. Commissioner Clinton Johnson was absent.

After the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance, the Chairman called for approval of the minutes of the November 7th Regular Meeting and November 14th Work Session.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Edwards, the minutes were unanimously approved.

The Chairman recognized 4-H Youth Development/County Extension Agent Latrina West-Paige and Dougherty County 4-H representatives to thank the Commission for their support. Due to testing, the students were not able to attend so a video presentation was provided.

The Chairman recognized William Ashberry, Chairman of the Board of Tax Assessors, to provide an update relative to the vacant Chief Appraiser role and the Tax Assessors Office. Tax Director Shonna Josey and Interim Tax Appraiser Larry Thomas were present. Mr. Ashberry announced that the Board lost the Chief Appraiser, Assistant Chief Appraiser, and Senior Appraiser. He also added that the current employees have two or fewer years of experience. It was shared that former Tax Appraiser and current Board Member Larry Thomas executed an agreement via the County Administrator to serve as Interim Chief Appraiser until the position is filled. Mr. Thomas will still serve on the Board and has received confirmation from former Attorney Lee that he could do so. However, he would have to abstain from voting on any cases he has been involved in. Mr. Ashberry shared that they would start interviewing and that it would take approximately three months to fill the positions. Unfortunately, based on the market, there are typically two offers for each person applying due to demand.

The Chairman recognized Walter Kelley, Library Board of Trustees Chairman and Gail Evans, Library Director, to provide their annual report. Mr. Kelley shared that the library department

for the FY 2021-2022 was under budget and that no complaints were received from patrons or employees. Ms. Gail provided a summary of what she deemed as a good year which included returning back to precovid hours. She highlighted the year in detail to include programming, partnerships and events at the Northwest branch. New and planned services and ideas on how to expand outreach services were shared. She said that challenges still exist regarding filling positions and supply chain issues have stalled the Westtown renovation project. Some preliminary discussion was held pertaining to the cost of the Westtown library.

The Chairman recognized Gerald Williams, Director, of Southwest Georgia Legal Self-Help Center to provide an update on services. Mr. Williams reviewed the needs and stressed that the center provides information and not advice to individuals. He asked the Board for financial support because there is no legislation pertaining to how the self-help centers are funded. There is currently a shortfall of \$20,000-\$30,000. Commissioner Gray shared that there has been a conversation to possibly make an ask to the legislation or city. Mr. Williams was asked to present budget information to Mr. McCoy and ask Justice Hodges about information regarding grant opportunities. A suggestion was made to possibly consider consolidating the law library and self-help center and use ASU interns.

The Chairman called for consideration the purchase of one John Deere 350P Excavator from state contract vendor Deere & Company (Cary, NC) for Public Works. The local vendor, Dobbs Equipment (formerly known as Flint Equipment) will be servicing the unit. The purchase price is \$366,161.37 with a proposed trade-in value of \$110,000 for Unit #511519. The actual cost will be \$256,161.37. Funding is budgeted in SPLOST VII- Storm Drainage Improvement.

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

The Chairman called for consideration to purchase one John Deere 300P Excavator from state contract vendor Deere & Company (Cary, NC) for Public Works. The local vendor, Dobbs Equipment (formerly known as Flint Equipment) will be servicing the unit. The purchase price is \$332,446.61 with a proposed trade-in value of \$80,000 for Unit #511450. The actual cost will be \$252,446.61. Funding is budgeted in SPLOST VII- Storm Drainage Improvement.

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

The Chairman called for consideration to purchase one 2022 Nissan Altima from the sole bidder meeting specifications, Five Star Nissan of Albany (GA) in the amount of \$28,115. Funding is budgeted in ARPA. County Administrator Michael McCoy, ADDU Major Ryan Ward and City of Albany Buyer Corey Gamble were present.

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

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to approve the LRA change order proposal for the installation of the Weir Gates at the Radium Spring Run Bridge in the amount of \$131,053. Funding is available in SPLOST VII – Stormwater Drainage Improvements. County Administrator Michael McCoy and County Engineer Jeremy Brown addressed.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Commissioner Newsome seconded the motion. Under discussion, Mr. McCoy shared that this will be located at the dam that Commissioner Edwards inquired about at the last meeting. Mr. Brown clarified the technical needs, especially for the monitoring of the Flint River Keepers. Mr. McCoy addressed Commissioner Edwards' questions about public access, stressing that there are rails and why the public should not have access. Chairman Cohilas suggested that there be a separate discussion regarding public access. Commissioner Edwards asked that the Board all go visit the site and then discuss it. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from the Library to apply for the State's Major Repair and Renovation (MRR) Grant in the amount of \$200,000 to renovate the Westtown Branch. This grant requires a 50% match. Funding for the local match in the amount of \$200,000 in addition to the budget shortfall of \$299,000 will come from SPLOST VI and VII. Library Director Gail Evans was present.

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

The Chairman called for consideration of the proposed board appointments.

Upon nomination by Commissioner Gaines, new applicant Ula Peterson was unanimously recommended to the City of Albany for ratification of the appointment for the Joint Board of Adjustments and Appeals.

Upon nomination by Commissioner Jones, new applicant Haryl Dabney was unanimously recommended to the City of Albany for ratification of the appointment for the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission.

The Chairman called for the review of the FY22 and FY23 ARPA budgets and to consider reallocating funding from the FY23 ARPA budget for a housing program. County Administrator Michael McCoy and Finance Director Martha Hendley addressed. This discussion will be moved to the 12<sup>th</sup> due to Commissioner Johnson's absence.

Commissioner Edwards asked for clarification on how the Board will proceed with viewing the dam. The Chairman said that he will review the information after the meeting and make a decision. Commissioner Edwards asked that the decision be placed on the agenda for discussion. Commissioner Jones shared information on the recent event that Pheobe Putney participated in at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church to ensure that we have a healthy community.

The Chairman called for consideration the recommendation from the County Attorney to enter into Executive Session for the purposes of attorney-client privileged discussion regarding the settlement approach to the LOST dispute and then to adjourn.

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

There being no further discussion, the Board entered into Executive Session at 10:59 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK