

## DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

### WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

July 29, 2024      DRAFT

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on July 29, 2024. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Present were Commissioners Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Victor Edwards, Anthony Jones, Clinton Johnson, 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 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, the Chairman recognized Tax Director Shonna Josey, Chief Appraiser Adam Bridges, and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Tax Assessors Larry Thomas to discuss the Certified 2024 Tax Digest for the Countywide M&O and Special Services District. Ms. Josey shared the 2024 County M&O Tax Digest Summary and said that the 2024 net value is 2,090,213,343 which is a net increase of 0.16%. The FLPA assess value is 13,097,062 and is a negative (3.64) net percentage change. There was a positive increase of \$10,465,695 or 4% for the 2024 M&O amount of 272,317,305 for Homestead & Property Exemptions. The Countywide M&O Tax Digest for net personal property assessed value is 344,867,518 which is a negative change from 2023 of (\$414,759) and (0.12%). For net real property M&O assessed value, the amount value is \$1,711,352,123 which is a positive change from 2023 of \$3,988,841 or 0.23%. Based on the 2023 Tax Year Millage Rate of 19.069, the levy and assessed amount is \$39,858,218 and a value of 2,090,213,343 for a parcel count of 37.795. Compared to 2023, the total tax levy increased by 0.16% and \$62,167 which was mentioned previously. FLPA, less the 3% Administrative Fee, there was a change of negative (\$9,139) and (3.64%). For tax year 2024, the exempt properties total is 514,093,125, which equates to \$26,340,690 or 5.40%. She discussed the rollback percentage and it was listed the same as 2023 of 19.069. If the Board keeps the millage rate the same, there will need to be three public hearings. Ms. Josey then reviewed the notice of property tax for the current 2024 Property Tax Digest and 5-year History of Levy by sharing the gross digest of 2,362,530,648 and equated \$39,858,278 for the total M&O taxes levied, yielding the previously discussed net tax increase of \$62,167 or 0.16% increase. Mistert Thomas and Bridges answered questions with Ms. Josey for the Board.

Information for the Special Services District was shared. The 2024 gross value is 708,796,973 which is a net increase of 0.19% less the homestead exemption of 111,877,373 and a negative change of (\$3,140,415) the increase is 2.89% giving the net digest of 2024 Assessed Value of 596,919,600, negative change of (\$1,794,358) or (0.30% net). The FLPA is negative (5.69%) and (\$1,012,916) for an assessed value of 16,780,922. The Special Services 2024 net personal property M&O is 48,513,668 which is a negative change from 2023 of (\$7,584,102) or (13.52%). For net real property, M&O assessed value is 533,051,299 which is a positive change from 2023 of \$5,65,125 or 1.07%. The Homestead and Property Exemptions 2024 M&O amount is 111,877,373 with a change of \$3,140,415 or 2.89%. Based on the 2023 Tax Year Millage rate, of 9.173, the levy and assessed amount is \$5,475,542, and the value of

\$596,919,600, for a parcel count of 9,328. Compared to 2023 the total tax levy decreased and is negative (\$16,461) or negative (0.30%) and FLPA decreased (\$9,013) or negative (5.69%). The 2024 Tax Digest Exempt & Properties is 154,422,770 and is a negative change for value and count (6,954,389 or 4.31%). Ms. Josey referenced the FLPA Revenue Reduction Calculator and shared that the reimbursement value is 16,780,922. She discussed the rollback percentage and it was listed the same as 2023 of 9.173. If the Board keeps the millage rate the same, three public hearings can be held with those for the Countywide. She reviewed the notice of property tax increase and gave the example that if the rates were kept the same, the fair market of a \$150,000 home will result in an increase of \$0.81 and the proposed tax increase for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$125,000 is an approximated increase of \$0.70. The Board requested that the notice for Countywide M&O be reflected as dollars and not percentages. She referenced the notice for the current 2024 Property Tax Digest and 5-year History of Levy noting that the gross digest of 708,796,973 with a net digest value of 596,919,600 and equates to a total levied amount of \$5,475,573, yielding previously discussed negative tax increase of (\$16,460) or (0.30%). Due to technical difficulties, PILOT and VPILOT information will have to be presented later. It was noted during the question and answer period that the tax sale will be rescheduled. The presentation concluded with a review of the 2024 Tax Digest Timeline.

The Chairman recognized Courtney E. Rogers, Senior Vice President, Davenport & Company LLC, to provide a FY25 Budget Review and Millage Rate discussion. Davenport, as our new financial advisor, was asked to review the County's FY25 budget along with the Tax Commissioner assessed values to recommend where to set the millage rate for FY25. Davenport reviewed the County's financial history dating back to FY19, along with some comparisons to budget results. Additionally, similar-sized counties in Georgia were used. He shared budgeting observations noting that Dougherty County has chosen to use a budget stabilization reserve in the last several budgets as a revenue source to balance the budget. Up to this point, it has not been utilized due to the operating expenditures coming in lower than budgeted and revenues coming in higher than budgeted.

Mr. Rogers wanted the Commission to view itself as a not-for-profit organization with nearly a \$100 million budget. The presentation focused on the top three areas: General Fund (\$73 million or 82%), Special Services District (\$10 million or 11%), and Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (\$5 million or 6%). He reviewed the General Fund Revenue History. The biggest concern is that property taxes for FY25 are budgeted higher than FY24 actual with no growth assessed values. The General Fund revenues actual versus the budget were discussed. He noted FY24 variance for other taxes and public utilities were not included in the FY24 budget. It was noted FY 23 increase was due to the change in the millage rate. Peer comparisons in the State were reviewed and Dougherty County was in range based on our size. The General Fund expenditures actual versus budget were discussed. Due to the County's change in software, the report only reflected changes to FY21. The top three areas were noted as: 43% of the FY24 Budget were salaries/ wages, 19% were benefits, and 14% were purchased/contracted services.). It was noted that the General Fund's actual expenditures had come in below budget in each of the last four years and the County is not an outlier based on peers.

The County has been able to add to the fund balance but primarily because of ARPA funds. The

last budget document of 2024 showed a 3-month operating reserve or 25% of revenues and they will come back with a suggestion for an adopted fund balance policy. Commissioner Jones noted that Dougherty County has no debt and Mr. Rogers shared that today's presentation focuses on the operation and he will discuss our debt status with their recommendation for a debt policy later. There was a lengthy discussion pertaining to HB581 and Ms. Josey, Mr. Bridges and Mr. Thomas shared information as well. Commissioner Jones asked that ACCG come and make a presentation so Commissioners can be better prepared to discuss this change with constituents. Discussion was held pertaining to the Special Services District Fund. Revenues had exceeded expenditures over the last six years. It was noted that public safety increased by 14% from FY24 to FY25 with an increase of \$1.1 million, requiring the use of the fund balance to cover the decreased revenues. The actual Special Services District Fund revenues exceeded the budget revenues over the last six years and expenditures have come in below budget, leading to a positive net variance each year. It was noted that the Special Services District Fund does not have an unassigned fund balance and it was recommended that a fund balance policy be set.

The Solid Waste Fund was discussed and it was noted that increases to fees can offset expected expenditures growth, and modestly add to the fund balance. The aggregate revenues have come in above budget over the last six years. The expenditures exceeded some budgeted line items when the actual versus budgeted expenditures were discussed. The effect of the tax digest on the FY25 Budget was discussed. It was noted that the Countywide net digest has grown less than 1% on average for the last 7 years. He shared that Ms. Josey had discussed the total M&O. He did note if the Commission decided to roll the millage rate back, the tax increase is 0.01% or \$3,641. The FY25 budgeted revenues were currently approximately \$2.8 million greater than the FY24 revenues (based on July 18, 2024). The unincorporated property net digest averaged a little over 2.5% until this year, 2025. It was noted that the unincorporated M&O tax level decreased in FY25 due to the increase in exemptions exceeding the growth in assessed values. A rollback of the millage would reduce the overall tax levy from a net decrease of \$16,478 to a net decrease of \$24,835. Budget observations were noted and the key ending factor was that the fund balance had not been needed prior to FY25 due to flat proper taxes and the increase on the expenditures side. In addition, there was a possibility that the fund balance may be needed in FY25. The recommendation was the same as Mr. Brooks noted; the FY25 budget and the millage rate should not change. There was a discussion regarding the next steps.

There was a break at 11:50 a.m. and the meeting reconvened at 11:58 a.m.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the quote from Pump Repair & Supply Inc. (McDonough, GA) in the amount of \$36,940 to upgrade and improve pump number 2 at the County's stormwater pump station 7. Consultants, ESG Operations, recommended the upgrade and improvements to prevent station failure. Public Works Director Chuck Mathis addressed. Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks and Engineering Manager Jeremy Brown were present. Funding is available in SPLOST VII. It was shared that stations on Mocking Bird were vital to the community. Mr. Mathis shared that our consultant monitors our pumps constantly and Commissioner Gray suggested that there be scheduled replacements created. Mr. Brooks reconfirmed that Public Works does plan but he wanted to present a capital improvement plan for the Board.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing Contract quotes to purchase a tanker truck for Dougherty County for a total expenditure of \$787,965. The Cab and Chassis will be purchased from MHC Kenworth of Atlanta, GA in the amount of \$226,590 and the tanker body will be purchased from Ten-8 Fire Company of Bradenton, FL in the amount of \$561,375. The Cab & Chassis will be delivered in ~180 days after receipt of order and the body will be available ~37 months after receipt of chassis by the body manufacturer. Approval is requested prior to August 1st to avoid price increases on both the Cab & Chassis & Body. Funding is budgeted in SPLOST VII and SPLOST VIII. Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed. Chief Cedric Scott, City of Albany Fleet Management Director Peter Bednar, and Fleet Asset Supervisor Dale Henry were present. Chief Scott reminded the Board that the discussion of the purchase started in 2019 and this tanker will be at Station 9 on Antioch Road. It was noted that the purchase helps with safety and does not impact our ISO ratings. The estimated delivery time was confirmed. Mr. Bednar said that the company will delay starting the warranty until the tanker truck is completely built.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the quote from Invision Technologies (Albany, Georgia) to enhance security for the Judicial and Albany-Dougherty Government Buildings for a total expenditure of \$184,893.74. The upgrade to the security surveillance system at the Judicial Building will include NDAA compliant IP cameras, server, licenses, and installation for a cost of \$31,799.09. The security surveillance system for the Albany Dougherty Government Building will include a NDAA compliant IP camera system for the Government Building, east and west parking decks, and an employee access control security system for a cost of \$153,094.65. The Finance Committee accepted the recommendation in the May 17, 2024 Committee meeting. Funding is budgeted in the General Fund. Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks and Major Ken Faust addressed. This request will replace the 29 analog cameras at the Judicial Building and this was a security upgrade. Per the request of Commissioner Johnson, Major Faust shared that the cost of the system for the Government Building will be split with the City of Albany. Upon a question from Commissioner Edwards, it was clarified that there will be no metal detector in the Government Center building. Sheriff-Elect Hayes clarified for Commissioner Edwards that there are incidents in this building, but modifications to the request could be made if desired. Major Faust said that the work plan would be 30-60 days because there was no hardwiring required. Both shared the advantage of having foot patrol in the area.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to rescind the May 6, 2024 award for the Dougherty County Sheriff's Office to purchase one 2024 Ford F150 Police Responder 4X4 in the amount \$55,095 from State Contract vendor, Wade Ford (Smyrna, Ga). Funding was available in SPLOST VIII. The vendor sold the vehicle prior to the Commission award. Another law enforcement vehicle has been identified. Major Ken Faust addressed.

The Chairman called for a recommendation from the Dougherty County Sheriff's Office to purchase one 2023 Ford F150 XLT Crew Truck in the amount \$55,462.06 from Wade Ford (Smyrna, Ga). Funding is available in SPLOST VIII. This purchase will replace the award made on May 6, 2024. Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks and Major Ken Faust addressed. In the previous discussion, Major Faust confirmed that this was a new civilian model.

Commissioner Gray asked if there would be an increase to upfit the truck and Major Faust shared that there would not be because this vehicle would be assigned to Captain Ted Thomas who is assigned to the youth division and does not transport inmates.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept three grants from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and the Council of Accountability Court Judges Operating Grant for FY 2025 in the amount of \$528,649 with a \$26,625 match. The Commission approved the grant application in the February 5, 2024 Regular Meeting. The match will be provided from the DATE Fund. Superior Court Program Coordinator Patricia Griffin addressed.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to declare a 2018 Ford Escape (from the Sheriff's Office) as surplus and authorize the sale through Charles Taylor TPA. Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed.

The Chairman called for a recommendation from the Recreation Committee Chairman for the full Board to discuss the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Albany, GA and Dougherty County, GA regarding the construction of a Tennis Center. Recreation Committee Chairman Victor Edwards, Acting County Administrator Barry Brooks, and County Attorney Alex Shalishali addressed. Commissioner Edwards provided an update on the individuals from the City of Albany and Dougherty County that participated. Attorney Shalishali shared that the City of Albany had signed the draft. The three major changes the City made were (1) the County takes action within 30 days of the location selection, (2) the County extends commitment another year, and (3) the City of Albany will add a pickleball court. Commissioner Johnson asked that the City of Albany reveal the amount of money they were dedicating to the pickleball court. Commissioner Jones shared that his concerns were currently being addressed in the MOU. Commissioner Gaines mentioned her concerns regarding the location and Commissioner Gray said that the City of Albany has already worked with Albany State University (ASU) to place the site on the West Campus and the proposal has been submitted to Chancellor Perdue at the Board of Regents. Chairman Heard and Commissioner Jones were clear that ASU West is not a favorable location. Commissioner Jones suggested an area off of Jefferson Street and Commissioner Johnson said he desired for the wording in the document be changed. Commissioner Gray was concerned about the perception of the County if action was not taken and not being more efficient in meeting community needs, especially with the small contribution of funds. Commissioner Newsome concurred noting advantages of the existing infrastructure, security, and other features. There was concern regarding the lack of partnerships prior to submission to the state between the city and county. Mr. Brooks proposed action regarding MOU and Attorney Shalishali was asked to research the initial funding of the project.

Mr. Brooks reminded the Board of the Special Called Meeting after the Work Session. He also shared that there was an emergency road repair needed on Fleming Road near the Marine Base. We need to proceed with the repair and can officially bring to the Board [later with final expenditures], but was seeking consensus today. Mr. Mathis addressed questions and noted the initially scheduled phase [of repair] and it was shared that the vendor was ready to mobilize. It was mentioned that the County does not want to shut down the road. Funding is planned from TSPLOST but an alternative source was being evaluated. There were no objections to proceeding

and an update on the security breach was provided. Forty servers had been brought back online since Friday and Mr. Brooks had provided a prioritization of impact to the City of Albany. Commissioner Gray asked if personal information has been impacted and if so, what mediation will be provided. Mr. Brooks said at this time, there was no personal information breached and there was no update on a full remedy.

Commissioner Johnson asked why the meeting was not held on July 22<sup>nd</sup> but there were two held on today. Clerk Ware shared the meeting schedule per the ordinance and today's main purpose for the Special Called Meeting was to enter into Executive Session and take action on urgent issues. Commissioner Gaines shared about the passing of Civil Rights Activist Bernice Johnson Riggins.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK