

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

October 31, 2022

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on October 31, 2022. Chairman Christopher Cohilas presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones and Ed Newsome. Also present were County Administrator Michael McCoy, County Attorney Alex Shalishali, County Clerk Jawahn Ware and other staff. Commissioner Russell Gray participated via the audio-conferencing feature. The public and representatives of the media participated in person via live streaming of the meeting on the County's Facebook page and the government public access channel.

The Chairman asked the Commission to review the minutes of the October 3rd Regular Meeting and the October 10th Work Session.

The Chairman recognized Consultant Phil Sutton to update the Commission on the Homestead Option Sales Tax (HOST). Mr. Sutton discussed what happens if LOST negotiations are not successful. He shared that the new distribution form must be submitted to the Department of Revenue no later than December 30, 2022. He added that the City and County would lose \$18,297,682 if LOST is not negotiated. He provided two options which were to increase the millage rate or implement a HOST. The HOST is a 1% sales tax and the primary purpose of it is to provide relief on homestead exempt properties. The secondary purpose is for capital expenditures (up to 20%) and there is no requirement to share revenue with the City under most circumstances. He shared that HOST has been adopted by DeKalb County and Rockdale County. A comparison between LOST and HOST was done with an overview of the tasks and timeline for implementation. It was noted that a referendum will be required and if successful, collections would not be until April 2024. He added that this would cause the County to be without sales tax collections for 15 months.

Other considerations pertaining to an alternative solution were shared. A lengthy discussion ensued. It was noted by Mr. Sutton that you cannot implement a HOST if a LOST or ELOST is in place. The consultant recommended not considering HOST unless "LOST is lost." Attorney Shalishali will provide legal guidance if the County should continue with the LOST process or meetings.

Recess was from 11:28 am- 11:36 am.

The Chairman recognized James Morgan, County Extension Coordinator, to update the Commission with the quarterly report. Mr. Morgan provided a handout of the 3rd quarter report and gave an update on filling vacancies. Upon the request of Commissioner Jones, an update on a recent contest at the fair was shared.

The Chairman recognized William Wright, representative for AFRAM Tech, Inc. to discuss an issue of unfair practices with ARPA funding. Mr. Wright started his presentation by sharing information to help the Commission with potential mediation or arbitration for LOST. He shared concerns in regards to the County collecting money but the population is being lost. He will bring more information, including details about the Taft-Hartley Act, to the Commission.

The Chairman recognized Alex Shalishali, County Attorney and Paul Forgey, Director of Planning and Development Services to provide an update on the "Variance Policy" for Zoning Considerations and the ability of amendment by the Dougherty County Board of Commissioners. Attorney Shalishali provided an overview of the current ordinance and shared that the governing body has full control of the zoning ordinance which they can amend. Practical considerations were provided. He added that most variances are noncontroversial. If the Board of Commissioners decided to start adjudicating requests, training will be required. He shared that most areas in the state delegate the variance process to a separate board such as the Planning Commission to handle it. After a recap by the Chairman, he suggested that an appraisal to the County Commission be provided in the motion regarding future decisions. Commissioner Jones requested education for homeowners be provided moving forward. Chairman Cohilas would like to digest the request of Commissioner Jones and have a substantive discussion at the next Work Session. Commissioner Edwards clarified that he is only concerned about an update on variances that the County Board of Commissioners denied.

The Chairman called for a discussion to accept the Memorandum of Agreement with Albany Technical College on behalf of the Dougherty County Sheriff's Office authorizing assistance to each other during a local emergency. Chief Deputy Terron Hayes addressed. Chief Hayes recommended approval and said this will allow them to respond in extenuating circumstances.

The Chairman called for a discussion to accept the proposal from the City of Albany for improvements to the basketball courts at Robert Cross Park in the amount of \$55,151.22. This request for maintenance and improvements to the park is consistent with the approved Service Delivery Strategy for Recreation. Funding is available in the FY 23 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Spending Plan. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed. Public Works Director Chuck Mathis was present. Mr. McCoy recommended approval after finding out that facilities are not up to par. Upon a question by Commissioner Johnson, Mr. McCoy shared that our park's funding is very limited. He also provided an update on the approximate balance of the ARPA funding and will provide details of expenditures at a future meeting. Commissioner Jones shared his concerns about funding not being made available for Putney Park via ARPA. Mr. Mathis and Mr. McCoy addressed by sharing with Commissioner Jones that the initial presentation was for use of SPLOST and contingency funds [for Putney Park]; and it was recently discovered that there is funding available in ARPA that could be directed to this current project. Chairman Cohilas asked that an update be provided at the next Work Session. The Chairman also stressed that a presentation can be provided to the local legislation and make a funding request. Commissioner Johnson reminded the Board that our recreation vendor is the City of Albany and shared that the best process is to have the City of Albany view Putney Park and make a presentation to the Recreation Committee with input from Commissioner Jones. Commissioner Jones also shared that consultant Ron Huffman did provide a park concept and Commissioner Johnson reminded the Board of grants denied.

The Chairman called for a discussion to exercise the renewal option from December 4, 2022 to December 3, 2023 with an adjustment to the hourly rates based on the CPI-U Base Price Adjustment Calculation with Tetra Tech. The option is for the Professional Debris Monitoring Services for Disasters and Financial Recovery. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed.

The Chairman called for a discussion to declare the listed vehicle as surplus and authorize the disposal of or sale of same via an online auction. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed. Mr. McCoy confirmed the Chairman's recap of the need to proceed and for Commissioner Johnson that we only pay when services are utilized.

The Chairman called for a discussion to declare the listed vehicle as surplus and authorize the disposal of or sale of the same via an online auction. County Administrator Michael McCoy addressed. Mr. McCoy recommended approval.

Commissioner Newsome thanked former Assistant County Administrator Scott Addison, in his absence, for his service and wished him the best in his future endeavors. Commissioner Edwards expressed how the movement for recreation has occurred, especially for children within the community. He expressed that this is a reason why discussions are being done to support efforts. Commissioner Johnson recognized the City of Albany counter partners who were present.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission entered into a Special Called Meeting at 12:37 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK