

DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

DRAFT

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

July 31, 2023

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on July 31, 2023. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, 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 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 roll call and the invocation, Chairman Heard asked the Commission to review the minutes of the July 10th Work Session and July 10th Special Called Meeting.

The Chairman recognized Human Resources Director Erica Potts to acknowledge the 2023 Interns for completion of the summer program. Eleven students participated in the program and seven were physically present in the meeting (others were preparing for school). Words of wisdom and advice were provided by the Board. The supporting departments were thanked and accolades were also given to Mrs. Potts.

The Chairman recognized Sheriff Sproul to provide an update on the implementation of tablets for inmates at the Jail. Sheriff Sproul introduced Chief Jailer John Ostrander and newly promoted Major Pamela Coley, who will be responsible for the Jail Security. Chief Ostrander shared that within 30 days, inmates have completed 23,393 course hours. He explained how assessments were used and noted some of the classes that were completed. Twenty-six learners have completed all 167 GED courses. There has been a positive impact on risk management, where violent acts have already been reduced by 50%. Security concerns and access were shared. Upon the request of Commissioner Jones, the most recent graduation of the students under the Dougherty County School System was shared. Feedback and accolades were provided by the Board. Commissioner Edwards asked Chief Ostrander for consideration to be made to ensure inmates "do not leave the way they came in." Chief shared that the court will address those concerns but the Jail is providing the courts information.

Sheriff Sproul introduced District Attorney Greg Edwards, DCP Chief Kenneth Johnson and APD Chief Michael Persley to discuss the potential merger of the two local units. The Albany Drug Unit (ADDU) was established in 1989 and the Albany Police Department Gang Task Force Unit was established in 2009. Based on the trends in the drug and gang community, it is best to reorganize and merge the two units. Commissioner Gaines asked DA Edwards to provide quantitative data to the media that supports our crime statistics as compared to other communities. Commissioner Gray shared that he is supportive of the merger but had concerns about the proposed merger document as it pertains to possible risk and liability concerns for both the City and County. The composition of the Board, operations, processes pertaining to the Unit Commander and asset

seizures were discussed. Commissioner Gray suggested that the new unit be a stand-alone unit. The members present shared the need for joint oversight by a Board; noting that one has been in place for decades. It was suggested that our County Attorney also review the document.

The Chairman recognized Interim Chief Appraiser Larry Thomas to update the Commission on the cell tower valuation. The cell tower valuation started approximately April 1st and is now completed. It was shared that we are currently in the appeals process. The value increased by approximately \$39 million, based on the difference between what the County had on the books and the proposed value from the assessment. Personal Property Manager Vicky Craft was present.

The Chairman recognized Tax Director Shonna Josey and Interim Chief Appraiser Larry Thomas to discuss the Certified 2023 Tax Digest for the Countywide M&O and Special Services District. The 2023 assessed value for the Net M&O Digest Countywide is 2,086,953,229 and reflected an increase of 2.10%. She reviewed the values for personal property, real property, and homestead and property exemptions. She shared that personal property was impacted by the recent cell tower valuation. The Net Personal Property M&O value is 345,282,277; real property is 1,707,363,282 and homestead and property exemption are 261,851,609. The tax digest summary was noted to be based on the adopted 2022 millage rate of 19.069. She explained the action the Board would take if they adopted the same millage rate or not.

The 2023 assessed value for the Special Services Digest is 598,715,958 and reflected an increase of 1.81%. Personal property, real property, homestead and property exemptions were reviewed. The net personal property value is 56,097,770; real property is 527,394,174 and homestead and property exemption is 108,734,958. The tax digest summary was noted to be based on the adopted 2022 millage rate of 9.173. The advertisement needs were discussed based on the will of the Board. Time sensitivity was shared, and Commissioner Newsome provided some historic context. There was consent provided for Mr. Brooks to provide information to consultant Ed Wall. Mrs. Josey concluded her presentation by sharing information pertaining to the Homeowner Tax Relief Grant (HTRG) which will provide additional property exemption in the amount of \$18,000 for all qualified homestead property.

The Chairman recognized the Founder of the Georgia Music Association Henry Thomas to discuss community concerns. He asked that the Board support his event and said that he will speak to his representative, Commissioner Gaines, on some of his additional planned initiatives. Commissioner Edwards asked Mr. Thomas to put a formal request in writing.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Albany for the 2023 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in the amount of \$20,512.80. The Agreement stipulates that the County will receive 20% of the total award (\$102,564). Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed. Finance Director Martha Hendley was present. Mr. Brooks said that this is a standard agreement that assisted with equipment needs.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the proposal for public information and marketing services in the amount of \$51,000 with The Levee Studios (Albany, GA). The proposal is for six months. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed. Mr. Brooks said that

this proposal was for our public information efforts due to the vacancy of former PIO Wendy Howell. The efforts that the Levee is currently performing were shared.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the resolution declaring a 2016 Ford Taurus Police Interceptor (from the Dougherty County Police Department) as surplus and authorize the sale through Underwriters Safety & Claims. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks addressed.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to accept the agreement to provide architectural services to renovate the Dougherty County Judicial Building in the amount of \$37,500 from SRJ Architects, Inc. (Albany, GA). The project scope is to create office space for the approved Judge and staff in the Dougherty County Judicial Circuit. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks and Facilities Management Director Heidi Hailey addressed. It was noted that this is for an additional Superior Court Judge. Judge Lockette has given a specific time frame for completion and the vendor is familiar with the building and has completed previous work. Ms. Hailey addressed some of Commissioner Gray's questions regarding the modification of existing space for the new Judge that starts in January 2024. She explained the cost and scope and shared that the budget and cost for this unfunded mandate will be determined.

The Chairman called for a recommendation to approve the alcohol application from Lyte Entertainment Inc., Prashant Patel licensee, dba Cowboy Bills, at 4502 Sylvester Road for Consumption- Liquor, Beer, and Wine. The Albany-Dougherty Marshal's Office recommended approval. Deputy Marshall Marcus Mitchell, Code Enforcement Department, addressed. Mr. Mitchell said that this application was a previously established licensed vendor under another owner.

Mr. Brooks reminded the Board of the dedication of the new roof at the Albany Rescue Mission, Joint Meeting with the City of Albany regarding TSPLOST II and the Special Called Meeting.

Commissioner Gaines asked Mrs. Josey to share more information about the FLPA exceptions. Commissioner Jones thanked the Board for allowing him to be the representative at the NACo Conference and provided an update on new members in the organization. Mrs. Josey shared that the Homeowners Tax Relief Grant will be reimbursable to the County.

There being no further business to discuss the Commission the meeting adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK