

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Work Session
May 24, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley, Vice Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Commissioner Shirley Hines, Commissioner Rosla Plant and Commissioner Alfred "Buster" McCoy

Commissioners Absent:

Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, Finance Director, Bill Gregory, and Deputy Clerk Allyson Stephens

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas and County Attorney, Michael Hill

I. WELCOME – Chairman Beth Neely-Hadley welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. ADOPT AGENDA

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Threadgill and seconded by Commissioner Plant to adopt the Agenda adding #3 *Under New Business- Discussion of Public Safety Tower*. All were in favor.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Revision of Solid Waste Ordinance Discussion: County Administrator, Michelle Irizarry stated that she would like direction from the Board. She stated that as of now there is a process that all companies picking up solid waste must submit an application and pay franchise fees. Administrator Irizarry stated she cannot find any applications that have been done and would like to know how this can be narrowed and updated and how the Board would like to proceed with collection. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that Keep Meriwether Beautiful suggested a proposal for chain link fencing around collection sites. Commissioner Hines suggested getting information from other counties on costs and regulations. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that in Harris County there were sites open Friday through Monday for household garbage and one site for construction and debris. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that in other counties there is a convenience tax, and this is added onto the property tax to have door to door pickup up. She also stated that the State prisoners assist with pickup routes and the fee was around \$200 per year and there was not a lot of employees involved. She also stated there was an option to pay to drop trash at a fee. Commissioner Hines asked how location of the disposal sites are determined. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that there were limitations with the HOST agreement, and it would need to be determined what is allowed. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated there would have to be a cost to dump as the county would have to pay to dispose of the trash and there would need to be a special account. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that individuals cannot be forced and would like to see it as a free service to citizens. Commissioner Hines stated that on top of that the landfill charges to dump and she does not feel this is a service we should charge citizens for. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that people are paying for the door-to-door service. Vice Chairman Threadgill suggested looking at 1 free day every 2 weeks to allow times for dumping and assist in keeping tires off the road. Commissioner Hines stated that she is hearing from citizens that they are upset with the dumping on county roads. Chairman Neely-Hadley suggested looking at ways to prevent this. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that the County used to provide dumpsters that were not staffed, and these would need to be staffed if they chose to do that in the future. Commissioner Hines asked how many dumpsters would be needed. Bill Cawthorne stated there were twelve site locations in Coweta County that were only open certain hours and are fenced. He also stated that bags can be picked up at Kroger for disposal and there is also door to door pickup service. Commissioner Hines stated there had been an increase in more larger items dumped on the roads such as mattresses and tires and this creates a problem for crews to cut the right of way. She stated the bigger items are the larger problem. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that there is now a transfer station in between Warm Springs and Manchester that is owned by a private company and there is a charge per load for disposal of solid waste. Allowing privatization was suggested and Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that there was a company that

had met with EPD, regarding the purchase of the Durand Landfill and plans were waiting to be dropped off and this same company opened up the transfer station at a different location. Commissioner Hines suggested looking at the old landfill for privatization as this may be more profitable. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that in Talbot county the solid waste pickup service is through county taxes. Ms. Jane Fryer with the IDA also stated that Troup County collects through taxes. Commissioner Hines suggested looking at the best sites for service and suggested privatization. Commissioner Hines would like to look at what the costs would be and what other counties are actually charging. Commissioner Hines does not feel others should have to pay as some citizens are driving from one end of the County to the other to dispose of solid waste and feels this should be a service provided to the citizens. Vice Chairman Threadgill suggested a trial in one location and checking with other counties to see what they provide. Commissioner Hines asked if the funds from the old Durand Landfill available, and what percentage could be used to offer the service at no charge. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that 99% of the budget comes from property taxes and he does not want to up the property taxes anymore. Commissioner Hines stated that most counties and cities have designated areas in the event of a disaster, for debris to be disposed. Ms. Jane Fryer stated that two times per year was not enough for the Clean up events as people are holding onto items and even after posting the rules there are issues with dumping. She stated they are always working on ways to make the next event better as the amount of trash is continually growing. She explained that the site in Manchester was fenced in, and fencing would help. She stated the locations of Alvaton, and Rocky Mount were in terrible shape. Commissioner Hines mentioned that people were also coming in off of Hwy 85 and Hwy 362 from other counties. Administrator Irizarry asked Public Works Director, Tyrell Johnson to get costs on fencing and temporary fencing for the two locations would be \$6500 and this would include the fencing and panels which can be reused by putting up and taking down. Ms. Fryer stated where to put the fencing would be the question. Commissioner Hines suggested a contract with the State prisoners. Commissioner McCoy stated some of those dumping trash are showing up at night and coming back days later as well. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that more discussion was needed to identify sites, look at privatization, and examine budget and costs. Bill Cawthorne stated he would look at the requirements from EPD and permitting. Bill Gregory stated he would look at funding and if the county takes a load deduction what it is worth from the tipping fees as well as the Durand Landfill funding. Commissioner McCoy left the room at 4:33 p.m. to take a phone call and returned at 4:33 p.m.

Update on Fire Stations: Commissioner Hines stated she requested discussion in a meeting that she was not in attendance, Mr. Gay expressed that there was no more funding for the construction of new fire stations. Finance Director, Bill Gregory put together a list and spreadsheet of the contracts and the change orders for the already constructed fire stations and presented it to the Board. Commissioner Hines wanted to understand how we are paying and what we are doing for *Alvaton* and Primrose and stated she would like more clarity as Primrose should have been the first station built. Finance Director Gregory stated that the only land paid for was Pebblebrook and Odessadale. Commissioner Hines stated that the Greenville Fire Station came in at \$1.185 million and there was no idea that it was slated. Director Gregory stated the initial bids during the first phase came in much higher than anticipated and they were able to bring down the costs. Commissioner Hines stated there was a tremendous amount being spent on the Greenville Fire Station and the amount it takes to build one in Greenville we were able to build four. Commissioner Hines asked Director Gregory how we were paying for this. Director Gregory stated that for the Fire District the tax money is collected one year prior and there was a fund balance. Director Gregory stated the profit from the fund balance was used as there was 1-year worth in advance before we can use it, creating a fund balance or monies in advance. Commissioner Plant stated that she was present on the Board in 1984 when the county accepted two CDBG grants: one for the Hill Haven Road location and one for the Pathways building. Commissioner Plant stated that the land donated for the fire station on Hill Haven Road was headquarters for Fire/EMS prior to having E-911. Commissioner Plant stated the headquarters were located in Greenville since 1984. She stated other stations were built. In 2016, there was a question on enlarging the current station on Hill Haven Road and there is no space or way to

expand. Commissioner Plant stated that County land was needed to build the station to make it larger. Commissioner Plant stated the City of Greenville had their own station and an agreement was made with the County as the County and the City were paying Workman's Compensation. Commissioner Plant stated there is a truck in Greenville that will need to be moved.

Commissioner Hines stated that this was not her issue, and her issue was how will we pay for Primrose and an upgrade in Alvaton. She asked if those citizens were being denied service. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked if there was a location for the Primrose Fire Station and was told there was not. He then asked when the Fire District would end. Director Gregory stated that there would be ongoing Operation and Maintenance costs. Commissioner Hines stated that as we grow, there would be more operational costs and money still needed to buy equipment. She asked if the County was in a position to pay staff. Commissioner Plant asked if it would be feasible to look as far south as Todd Road. Commissioner Hines stated that there was no intention on Todd Road after building in Greenville as the area of coverage is five miles and this was too close to Todd Road. Chairman Neely-Hadley stated that prices had gone up. Commissioner Plant stated there needs to be a location. Commissioner Hines stated that only two of the fire stations built were below budget and all the rest were over budget. Bill Cawthorne stated that the costs for the steel package due to market volatility the steel package for Greenville was \$100,000 more than Woodbury and Pebblebrook/Cove. He stated Greenville was \$100,000 and Woodbury and Pebblebrook/Cove were \$64,000. Bill Cawthorne stated projected completion for Greenville was June 10th. More discussion began on funding and how to have funding. Commissioner Hines asked if the SAFER Grant was available again. Brin Jones, E-911 stated that the SAFER Grant is only for three years and after that the County absorbs the costs. Commissioner Hines mentioned CDBG grant for equipment and wants to know how it will be sustainable. Vice Chairman Threadgill stated that the County has been missing out on Medicaid and Medicare money for years due to not having non-emergency transports. He stated that it does not have to be staff to provide this service and would be additional income. Brin Jones also stated that only a stretcher and wheelchair are needed. Commissioner Hines stated this was an option and would also help a lot of the elderly. Vice Chairman Threadgill explained on demand transport and that doctor's offices need this service and would be a valuable resource for income. Commissioner Hines suggested exploration of a grant writer for USDA and CDBG availability.

Public Safety Communications Tower: E-911 Director, Brin Jones stated that back on March 17, 2022, a tractor trailer pulled into the Hill Haven Road Fire Station parking lot attempting to turn around. He stated that the tractor trailer snagged the guywire pulling down the tower and since then the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office communications equipment has been combined and it has decreased coverage. Director Jones stated that so far, the County received around \$60,000 and \$13,000 was for clean up of the old tower and emergency temporary relocation of the antennas to the Sheriff's office tower. Both towers were constructed in 1986 according to Director Jones. Director Jones stated that there were some options, and the first option was to build a new tower at 330 feet to improve the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department Coverage. This would be at a cost of maybe \$300,000 just for a tower behind the fuel pumps. After some research, Director Jones stated he found a tower company that has space at the level needed for \$350 per month to increase annually. The tower is located at 1186 N. Talbotton Street in Greenville and is part of Public Service Telephone. This would be \$4,000 per year and would increase 3% annually. Director Jones stated there would still need to be a building built and antennas built to be transferred. Commissioner Hines asked how effective this would be to needs. Director Jones stated there would be immediate improvement on reception and availability. Director Jones stated he was waiting on two more quotes from Mobile Comm and McSwaggart. Commissioner McCoy was not sure what original permit stated on any kind of space. Commissioner Threadgill stated that those were ones that the Board voted on and not prior. Commissioner Hines asked would the radios themselves be adequate. Director Jones stated that updating radios is an ongoing thing and he has been slowly replacing radios over time and hopes to be all digital communications. Vice Chairman Threadgill asked how much fiber would be needed and asked Director Jones to find out. Commissioner Hines stated something must be done. The

Board suggested to Director Jones to find out what would need to be done and they suggested a ceiling price not to exceed \$95,000 based on available connectivity.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

V. CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The Work Session concluded at 5:20 p.m.

VI. FUTURE MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Future Meetings were listed on the Agenda

Approved by: Majority Vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Allyson S. Stephens

Date: June 8, 2022