

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Work Session
July 13, 2023, 4:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Gene King, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Adam Worsley

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Present: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry, Finance Director Bill Gregory, Deputy Clerk Allyson Stephens, Director of Special Projects Theron Gay, and County Attorney Michael Hill

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas

I. WELCOME – Chairman Bryan Threadgill welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel: County Administrator Michelle Irizarry stated that it was requested from the Department Heads to present what was needed as of right now for position control or Personnel in the office and a wish list to see what is needed to make their Departments run full force. Administrator Irizarry stated that each of the Departments did this a little bit differently and opened the floor up to Mr. Will Harris with an overview for his department.

Tax Assessors: Chief Appraiser Will Harris stated that the way he prepared his was pretty simple and he was looking to overhaul two positions, one being an administrative position that he would like to switch to an appeals position, and this is due to a lot of newer houses and a lot of valuation changes that will be coming. Mr. Harris stated that there is typically not a lot of appeals in Meriwether County and is not something the staff is trained for but looking into future changes and the things going on in the counties around us, he believes their office should prepare for those things, because people are becoming more aware of their appeal options. Mr. Harris stated the second part of that would be an assistant chief position and the reason he is asking for this because if there is ever a situation in which he is not available, there should be someone there that could steer the direction of the office. Mr. Harris stated he really believed in creating chain of commands and in case something happens scenarios and believes we should start investing in our employees. Mr. Harris stated everything else besides that is more about education and training. Mr. Harris stated our employees are our assets and he believes in investing in those assets, but other than the changes to those two positions, he is not requesting much else. Mr. Theron Gay asked Mr. Harris about the requirements of the State for the positions in the office. Mr. Harris stated that by statute, for each set of parcels there should be an appraiser for certain designations and in the State of Georgia there are designations that go from level 1 to level 4. Mr. Harris stated he is a level 4 and fulfills the designation for the level 4. Mr. Harris stated as far as levels 1, 2, and 3, they do have level 1 and 2s, but no level 3s and are working towards that, but if we go back to appeals and who can present at hearings in court, those things are based on the designation of the appraisers and as more new homes are added, by law, Mr. Harris stated he is suppose to have an appraiser to cover so many parcels. Commissioner Worsley asked Mr. Harris if we were in compliance per the State as of today. Mr. Harris stated the office was not and was 1 ½ short. Commissioner Worsley asked Mr. Harris if he should have added that to his request. Mr. Harris stated it is a statewide issue with shortages and the requirements were designated before computers were used for processing and there were things that were taking hours out in the field, requiring someone to come into the office and spend a day. Commissioner Worsley stated that if this is mandated by the State, we are not in compliance. Mr. Harris stated it is more suggested than mandated. Mr. Gay stated that there was turnover in the office, and we have worked through that and never been written up or fined. Administrator Irizarry asked Mr. Harris how long he had been with Meriwether County. Mr. Harris stated he had been with Meriwether County since December 19,

2022, and since he has been employed, he has had 2 employees become an Appraiser 2, 1 become an Appraiser 1, and in January they will be testing to become an Appraiser 2. Chairman Threadgill asked when the Appraiser 2s would become Appraiser 3s. Mr. Harris stated depending on exam dates, he feels this would be next summer. Chairman Threadgill asked at that time would we meet what is needed. Mr. Harris stated as far as qualifications we would. Chairman Threadgill stated that we have the employees we need, but not all the qualifications. Mr. Harris stated that by being an Appraiser 4, he can carry more weight than as an Appraiser 3, who can actually be a Chief Appraiser. Commissioner Worsley asked again how many bodies short are we as required by State mandate as there are 7 employees on the list. Commissioner Worsley asked how many we need per parcel count as required by the state. Mr. Gay stated it is a recommended number. Mr. Harris stated we need 8.5 positions, which is the recommendation. Commissioner Worsley stated what is the plan for that as we have a plan for getting the qualifications. Mr. Harris stated he did not have a plan for that at this time. Vice Chairman King asked for clarification on the Appeals Administrator position and if other counties have that position. Mr. Harris stated that most counties have an Appeals Administrator, and we do not. Mr. Harris explained that this position is responsible for handling appeals from the time they come in, until the time they leave. Mr. Harris stated that if someone called needing the appeals statistics from the Department of Revenue, an Appeals Administrator would be the one to handle that. Mr. Harris explained with the changing of costs tables in the future, he is expecting more people to come in and have conversations and want to appeal and we need a way to funnel all that information versus 7 different people touching the appeals just trying to help the taxpayers. County Attorney Michael Hill stated there are specific statutory guidelines or requirements you are supposed to follow for tax assessment appeals and with those being specific, having someone who knows the process is probably a good thing to have.

Fire/Rescue: Chief Danny Stephens stated as far as his department, there are a substantial number of vacancies. Chief Stephens stated that in his wish list, there is a request to bring up pay and become more competitive as well as addressing aging equipment. Chief Stephens stated that Fire/Rescue has a total of 51 positions, which includes from his title, all the way down the line. Chief Stephens stated that 45 of those positions are line staff and 6 of those positions are administrative staff. Chief Stephens stated that for the Administrative Staff there is an Operations Chief, Training Chief, Logistics Chief, Logistics and Maintenance, Administrative Assistant, and himself. Chief Stephens stated that out of the 45 line personnel, he has 20 positions filled and 25 of those are vacancies that fluctuate up and down depending on the environment. Chief Stephens stated he had been in contact with Human Resources, whom has had a lot of conversations with those employees that are leaving and majority of those are leaving for more compensation. Chief Stephens stated in the wish list he provided, it shows some of the EMS apparatus have a lot of age and miles on them. Chief Stephens stated this year there have been a lot of expensive repairs to numerous vehicles as extensive as transmission, engine, a/c units, and ride system suspension type repairs. Chief Stephens stated that if there was a way to replace those apparatus annually, 3-4 years, or 240,000 miles, by the time that apparatus ages out. Chief Stephens stated right now he has a couple of apparatus with 400,000 miles on them. Chief Stephens stated that two fire trucks were purchased when we started the Fire District and those are two of the front-line trucks now but there is aging fire apparatus as well. Chief Stephens stated he does have a spreadsheet that provides a pay increase of 25% over 4 years that can be provided to the Board. Chief Stephens stated that we were given the SAFER Grant when the Fire District started and that helped with employees up front, but that has run out. Chief Stephens stated that right now the Department is running single-man engines and what that means is one person is on the fire apparatus. Chief Stephens stated EMS has two people on their apparatus, but Fire has one. Chairman Threadgill stated that that was the original plan. Chief Stephens stated that is right, and that is why this is the wish part of the request by possibly adding a second person to that fire station, instead of one person being in a fire station by themselves for 24 hours. Chief Stephens stated if there are two people there, there is always some accountability with those individuals and creates an opportunity for the possibility of another SAFER Grant, but we won't know until we get that

paperwork done. Chief Stephens stated another part of the wish list is renovations to some of the volunteer stations in the future as there are outlying stations that need work, such as Stovall. Chief Stephens stated that the volunteer stations house apparatus, but they don't have well and septic tanks. Chief Stephens stated the last item on his wish list is administrative vehicles. Chief Stephens stated he has four of those and one of those is a battalion unit. Chief Stephens stated the last two trucks replaced were his and the battalion unit, but there are other administrative vehicles with high mileage that will need to be replaced. Chairman Threadgill asked what the thought process was in putting two individuals in a Fire truck, because before there was a full-time fire department, there were volunteers and the purpose of doing the Fire Department was for a quicker response, due to volunteers having to come from where they were to pick up a truck and respond. Chairman Threadgill stated it wasn't to have a fully manned entire building and he understands the wish for it, but what we are able to employ at this point and we are not, Chairman Threadgill feels it does serve the purpose of what it was created for. Chairman Threadgill stated that to him it would be more beneficial, if able to put an ambulance at each station than an additional fire fighter. Chief Stephens stated he is glad Chairman Threadgill brought this up, because they may or may not know that there are two licensed fire engines available for EMS response. Chief Stephens stated they have all fluids, monitor, oxygen, and iv's, but don't have transport capabilities. Chief Stephens stated that they are working in the direction of equipping all the fire trucks the same, but with that, NFPA and ISO look at fire staffing as it is not an engine company without 4 people with two being half of that. Chief Stephens stated that he knows and also dealt with the issue at the State Training Center, that there is a massive decline in volunteers throughout the country. Chief Stephens stated that most of the staff they have now, were originally volunteers, who were hired as full-time staff. Chief Stephens explained it takes both volunteers and full-time staff, but Monday through Friday, from 8-5, the people he has and can guarantee are those that we pay and have on trucks. Chief Stephens stated that during evening hours and weekends, volunteers can help respond, but there is still a gap and feels that is why a lot of this was created, was to guarantee Fire and EMS services during those daytime hours when it may be needed. Chief Stephens explained that in Newnan and Troup, a lot of those individuals who pair on trucks have to ride 5 years before they can go out and a lot of those individuals ride backwards with custom cabs with an engineer driving and an officer in the front seat. Chief Stephens states when those trucks pull up, the officer starts making decisions on a fire scene, engineers start establishing water supply and pumping to the fire scene and he has a firefighter. The second engine assists with firefighting operations. Chief Stephens explained with the County's firefighters, there is one person on the truck that has maybe two years' experience with the County or 5 years as a volunteer that is assigned to an engine who has to play all the roles. Chief Stephens explained why it is better to have two people as there are two minds, two brains, two intersection clearers, as it creates a safer scene. Chief Stephens understands the need to fill the positions that would make things a lot better but feels that in the future there should be a plan to double up the stations. Chief Stephens also explained that they have to bring their own water to fight fire as there is no Countywide water system. Chief Stephens states if there are two people in the fire station, one can take an engine and one can take a tanker which means there are 2000 gallons of water versus 1000 gallons, and if there are three stations paged out that is 6,000 gallons of water if there are two-manned stations. Chief Stephens explained that water is one of the biggest gaps with ISO rating. Vice Chairman King stated he was not a part of when the Fire District started but he receives a lot of calls from people that are under the impression that the fire stations would be manned, and they go by and there is no one there. Vice Chairman King stated he was under the same impression and was not involved when the Fire District took place and understands the need for two to a fire station, but we are having a hard time keeping one in the station with what they are being paid. Chief Stephens stated that COVID created a war on firefighters, EMTs, Paramedics, and Police Officers. Chairman Threadgill stated they are moving in a good direction. Chief Stephens stated that if he could at least fill 10 of the open positions, it would be a big help. Chairman Threadgill stated that it was not just Meriwether County. Chief Stephens understood and stated that he received a text that Troup County

increased the salary of their Police Officers, Firefighters, Paramedics, and EMTs \$6,000 a year and thought, I have to keep what I have and go hug them and sweet talk them as that is a lot of money. Vice Chairman King stated he hopes we can find it, because the citizens deserve to have the service. Chief Stephens stated that one of the benefits of the paid fire stations in Meriwether County was the EMS benefit and getting someone to respond that could at least perform basic life support in the event of an emergency. Commissioner Worsley asked Chief Stephens about the vacant positions as he was showing 11 vacant on EMS side and 2 on Fire. Chief Stephens stated he is showing 12 filled on EMS and 8 on Fire. Chief Stephens explained that there are 45 total positions with EMS and Fire full time and the other positions are part time. Commissioner Worsley asked if the wish list of 18 was in addition to the 69 total positions making it 87. Chief Stephens stated yes, but if all full-time positions were filled, you could eliminate most part time. Commissioner Worsley asked Chief Stephens if there was a requirement for EMS and/or Fire based on the per capita or square miles of coverage. Chief Stephens explained that there are two different entities as Paramedics and EMTs fall under the Department of Public Health and Office of EMS that come and do their inspections. Chief Stephens stated Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council requires the County to show that we can provide service anytime of the day for a fire in order to maintain fire compliance certification.

Planning and Zoning: Planning and Zoning Director Cassandra Sharpe stated that they are fully staffed at the moment and doesn't see a need for any staff with the new online permitting system going up. Vice Chairman King asked if the new software was up and running. Director Sharpe stated they are in a soft run on the system right now and staff is inputting everything online in the office, but it is not online for an individual citizen to go on at this time as they are working the kinks out. Director Sharpe stated the Building Inspector is able to go in and put all information and inspections online as well. Vice Chairman King stated there was a problem getting an email back. Director Sharpe explained that the button has not been turned on for anyone to receive emails as they are only on a soft open. Vice Chairman King asked when it does go live if citizens will be able to do everything that can be done in other counties such as applying, downloading, and receiving permits. Director Sharpe stated that everything would be online and would be able to be done online.

Elections: Elections Superintendent Patti Threadgill had to leave, but Elections is not seeking any additional personnel at this time.

I.T.: I.T. Director Matthew Brown stated that the only thing he is asking for at this time is for his assistant to move from part-time to full-time. Director Brown stated they keep up with everything okay, but there are a lot of projects and a lot of things he would like to fix and implement that would make things a whole lot easier if he had another person there with him 40 hours per week. Vice Chairman King asked how many hours per week the assistant was getting now. Director Brown stated Jake works 24 hours per week. Commissioner Worsley asked how it is determined for different consultant positions. Administrator Irizarry stated that at the time the previous I.T. Director left, there was not enough time to train Matthew as he was only here two days prior to Mr. Richmond leaving. Administrator Irizarry stated the Board approved Mr. Richmond staying on and since his departure he has never gotten over 10 hours per week. Commissioner Worsley stated that there were several departments with consultants, and he wanted to know how this was determined. Chairman Threadgill stated for other departments there were times in the past when there was not a Department Head because they had either left or they were chosen to leave so there needed to be someone put in at that point per requirements of State law and some of those are still in place. Commissioner Worsley stated that he understood, but in some places, it seems it has run its course.

Public Works: Mr. Bill Cawthorne with Public Works stated one of the biggest issues is staff and the lack of having a full department. Mr. Cawthorne stated that there are 9 open positions, and this changes week to week but feels this is the biggest hurdle that Public Works is facing. Mr. Cawthorne stated that majority of the workforce has been there only 2 years or less and there is a small handful that has been there longer. Mr. Cawthorne stated there is not a lot of retention. Mr. Cawthorne stated there are 38 approved positions with 35 being full-time positions and 3 being part-time positions. Chairman Threadgill asked Mr. Cawthorne what he felt the problem was with retaining employees.

Mr. Cawthorne stated pay was the main problem and competition as he had spoken with Coweta County, and they are facing the same things. Mr. Cawthorne stated the Department has some equipment wishes that will be placed in the budget this year. Mr. Cawthorne stated a used tandem dump truck, lowboy trailer, and weed eaters and chainsaws. Commissioner Worsley stated that Mr. Cawthorne had made a request for a merit-pay scale system, which he felt was needed across all departments. Mr. Cawthorne stated it was a suggestion. Commissioner Worsley asked if he had a baseline recommendation for the Department. Mr. Cawthorne stated he would need to do some research to provide that. Commissioner Worsley asked if we have access to State records to pull average wages from every County across the State. Administrator Irizarry stated there is a website that is open to the public for the salaries of State employees, but she didn't know about a website for County employees. Mr. Theron Gay, Special Projects Director suggested having Human Resources conduct a survey of surrounding counties. Commissioner Worsley stated it was a double-edged sword as you are competing with Counties that are similar to ours as well as the counties that surround us that are larger. Mr. Cawthorne stated another field of competition would be construction companies who are looking for equipment operators. Mr. Cawthorne stated that he would like to see something done to gain retention to get employees who stay long enough to gain the knowledge and experience.

E-911: Director Brin Jones stated that his department is not much different than others when it comes to retention and trying to keep employees. Director Jones stated that he does try to cut costs where he can and believes he has come up with a plan to be able to increase wages. Director Jones stated that as it stands now, the hourly rate for dispatchers is \$2.00 below the other counties that touch. Director Jones stated that those who are hired seem to like the training and stay when hired on, however it is getting harder and harder to keep an employee who is offered several more dollars an hour to go somewhere else. Director Jones stated that his plan involves cutting 1.5 positions and asking the Board to fund the rest. Chairman Threadgill asked if E-911 had any vacancies. Director Jones stated he had 4 vacancies. Chairman Threadgill asked if there were any applicants for those vacancies. Director Jones stated they do and are in the application process now and he has hired one and looking to hire another but is in limbo regarding the third full time position and part time position and using those funds for wage increases. Chairman Threadgill stated that the E-911 has been pretty much fully staffed since he had been on the Board and their department was one of the lucky ones. Director Jones stated that it was pretty stable, but it gets more and more difficult, and he has a full-timer now that has been with them for a while that is leaving to go to another agency.

EMA: Director Jones stated that in EMA he is requesting a part-time position for 29 hours a week, no more than 1508 hours a year to help in keeping up with everything needed for EMA as the requirements have grown over the years and to keep the Emergency Operations Center in a constant state of readiness as well as equipment, if needed to be deployed. Director Jones stated that the County has been very lucky, but it is getting more and more with three tornados just this year. Director Jones stated he is asking for an EMA technician part-time for \$15.00 per hour that is responsible for day to day tasks such as checking off equipment, checking off trailers, checking off the emergency command post, and ensuring that the Emergency Operations Center is in a state of readiness. Director Jones stated there was a letter that he sent to the Administrator before the meeting. Administrator Irizarry stated she would forward that to the Board.

Animal Control: Director George Richmond stated that when he submitted this, he originally had a staff of three full-time employees and 2 part-time employees, and his goal was to eliminate the part-time positions as it was so hard to manage those positions with the hours and wages. Director Richmond stated that he has since had one staff member leave and was able to move one part-timer to full-time and combine the other two part-time positions to a full-time position and staffing wise, Director Richmond stated he is where he wants to be right now. Director Richmond stated every employee has the title of animal control and kennel tech, which is good for staffing. Director Richmond stated he would like to request wage increases down the road to maintain the staff he has and has one employee who has been there 6 years and everyone else has been there 1 year or less. Director Richmond stated they have one truck that needs replaced that has been in use since the

shelter opened with 330,000 miles on the unit and the a/c has not been able to be repaired for two years. Director Richmond stated that when the tornado came through, the stack was broken off of the incinerator and it is inoperable. Director Richmond stated his staff works hard, giving up weekends and holidays to do off-site adoption events. Chairman Threadgill asked if the truck that needs replacing had a cage on the back that could be reused. Director Richmond stated it is old and has a couple of compartments that open and close. Chairman Threadgill suggested that Director Richmond search for a truck and he will see if their contacts could help them out. Commissioner Worsley asked about the a/c unit that has been out for two years. Director Richmond stated the cost to repair the a/c was over \$2,000 and that they only use it when they have to and rely on his truck and the other animal control truck. Director Richmond stated the animal control truck goes to Auburn every other week for spay and neutering as well as transports to Atlanta Humane and there are times where that is the only animal control truck in the County. Chairman Threadgill let the Board know that there has been a contract with Auburn for 3-4 years and the 4th year vet students do the spay and neutering for free. That is funded by an organization that pays Auburn to do those for the County at no cost to us. Director Richmond stated that that same grant helps Animal Control out with grants every quarter which saves their budget immensely for food and supplies. Commissioner Plant asked Director Richmond how she was to get her cat spayed. Director Richmond stated that they have a relationship with Harris County Humane Society that will take Meriwether County residents cats and spay and neuter them for free as well as provide their vaccines. Chairman Threadgill asked Director Richmond to inquire about the cost of an incinerator. Director Richmond stated he would as they are not the only department that uses that. Director Richmond stated that for the last 6 years, Meriwether County has had the highest live release rate in the State at 98%. Commissioner Plant asked if there were still transports up north. Director Richmond stated they do, but that has slowed down as a lot of the shelters are full and right now, they have 49 dogs in their kennels and have taken in 65 cats in the last 45 days.

Finance: Director Bill Gregory stated that he is requesting salary increases for his staff as their responsibilities have increased as well as taking on more of a responsibility with authorities that was much more than anticipated as well as one taking on the role of a rental listing agent. Director Gregory also stated that there are more customers for water, increasing the responsibility of water billing.

Administration: Administrator Irizarry stated that there was not much put on the list for the Administration Department, but reminded the Board that Mr. Gay and Mr. Cawthorne were both consultants on a part-time basis and do wish to retire by year end. Administrator Irizarry asked for a Project Manager or Assistant County Manager that serves in the capacity of Project Manager. Vice Chairman King stated he felt it was important to have a project manager to have inhouse instead of hiring out.

Human Resources: Director Valerie Chambers thanked the Board for allowing her to present her requests. Director Chambers asked for a full-time position to assist her with clerical day-to-day duties as she spends most of her day on these and would like some help so she could focus on the Human Resource managerial duties for the County. Chairman Threadgill asked if she wanted a full-time position. Director Chambers stated full-time, part-time, or any help she could get. Director Chambers stated she had been on a fast track to get her HR Government Certification and was almost complete and proud of that and has included on her budget the past practice percentage given when an employee obtains a job-related certification and would hope the Board would approve that for her. Commissioner Worsley stated that there had been previous discussion of hiring an administrative assistant position in general and wanted to know if that was something that she would need a full-time position as well as Administration. Administrator Irizarry stated that he felt there could be a person hired to start out as part-time or full-time to serve at the capacity of the whole office. Chairman Threadgill stated that there will be changes coming in the office and feels that an administrative assistant would be the way to go.

2. Budget

Finance Director Bill Gregory presented the Board with a timeline of how the Budget has been done in the past. Director Gregory stated by June 30th they have collected data and put data together for the first nine (9) full months of the year. During the time period of July 1st through July 15th, the Finance department is able to close the month of June for cost forecasting. Director Gregory explained that they begin meeting with Department Heads and Constitutional Officers for budget review meetings, and to forecast costs for their departments and offices to prepare a preliminary budget for the next fiscal year. Director Gregory stated that the Department Heads drive what they will need for their office, and it is based on a 5–10-year history. Special Projects Director Theron Gay stated these calculations are historic calculations and are projections for what may be needed. Commissioner Worsley asked Mr. Gay if what the Department Heads would do if they were smart would be to ask for their wish list as they have to the Board today, during their budget meeting. Mr. Gay explained that they would not necessarily ask for their wish list, but they have to have a list. Commissioner Worsley stated he was confused as it seems to him that all of this will go on before it comes to the Board of Commissioners, so how can the Board decide to give them what they are requesting if it is altered before it ever gets back to the Board for review. Mr. Gay explained that our balance of expenditures has to match our revenues. Commissioner Worsley stated it would be interesting to see what their wish list is and how it compares to current revenue and how far out of the world it is or in line is it and are we brazen enough to attempt or go in phases. Commissioner Worsley stated it would be interesting to see where we are as compared to what the Department Heads are saying they need to run this County. Chairman Threadgill explained that there will be multiple meetings that will have to be advertised to present the information to the Board. Chairman Threadgill explained that when it comes before the Board, they will be able to see what their budget was last year and what their department spent compared to what they are asking for in the new budget and be able to question. Commissioner Worsley stated he understood that but would like to see how it shakes out versus revenues, and unfiltered, unadulterated versions of what they feel like they need. Finance Director Gregory stated that when it is presented to the Board, there will be a column for Personnel for what each department currently has, and if they are requesting additional, there will be a separate column. Finance Director Gregory stated that in previous years it was suggested that the County Commissioners sit in on the budget review meetings and a couple did and it was very helpful. Vice Chairman King asked when the last time the county put out to bid for hauling gravel, because as many roads as we have and as much gravel as we need, he believes the county would save money by hauling the gravel themselves and getting it at a better price. Vice Chairman King stated there is a big difference in what the County is paying per ton and what he can purchase for per ton. Finance Director Gregory explained it would require having personnel. Vice Chairman King stated that he understood but what would it cost to have one driver that hauls gravel and when it is stockpiled, he goes back to other duties needed. Vice Chairman King feels we could save money. Mr. Gay explained that we do haul the gravel when we have someone available to do that, however it requires cdl drivers and he knows that Mr. Cawthorne looks at rates several times a year. Vice Chairman King stated he understood the need for drivers, but knew several older drivers that would love to leave the hustle and bustle and be available to come and drive when gravel is needed, because we go through a lot of gravel. Mr. Gay explained that depending on where the Public Works Department is working in the county is where we try to purchase gravel. Commissioner Collins suggested in times of rain to send two trucks to get gravel and pile it up. Vice Chairman King stated to stockpile it as it will be used and feels it needs to be looked into as he feels it could save the County money. Finance Director Gregory stated that on August 9th there will be a report made to the Board on the progress of budget negotiations. Administrator Irizarry stated that August 9th, is when the auditors will be onsite. Director Gregory explained that there would be potential dates for the 2023-2024 Budget presentation on either August 29th, or September 13th. Finance Director Gregory stated that the Budget will be presented for approval on September 26, 2023. Administrator Irizarry stated they will have the numbers from the Tax Assessors Office on July 21, 2023. Finance Director Gregory stated

this will give us the 5-year history to see where we stand on revenue. Mr. Gay discussed the process of the millage rate and that it would occur in August and that it would be important to look at the rollback rate as opposed to basing the rate on reassessed values. Mr. Gay explained that up until about 6-7 years prior, Meriwether County had to borrow money for their budget. Finance Director Gregory stated there has been no TAN for the last several years. Commissioner Plant wanted to verify that there was not a separate line item for big ticket items such as the Jail. Finance Director Gregory stated that these funds come out of SPLOST and other designated funds. Chairman Threadgill stated that there was an ambulance that was approved, and we need to get that taken care of. Mr. Gay stated that he is waiting on specifications for that. Chairman Threadgill stated that he feels that the study that Mr. Gay suggested Valerie do should be done across the board as to what we provide as far as benefits as we may not be far off. There was discussion regarding sign on bonuses. Vice Chairman King stated that was a good idea, but they would need to commit to being there a certain amount of time. Commissioner Worsley asked questions about the grand total of the surplus and projections. Finance Director Gregory explained that all of those projections are not done, and this is more of what the budget will look like. Vice Chairman King stated that he has a constituent on Alvaton Road that turned 100 years old named Maggie Norris. It was suggested to do a proclamation at the next meeting for Ms. Norris and there would need to be information gathered.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

County Attorney Michael Hill stated there was a need for Executive Session for Litigation and Personnel. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Worsley to go into Executive Session for the purposes of Litigation and Personnel at 4:00 p.m. All were in favor. Commissioner Collins entered Executive Session at 4:01 p.m. Vice Chairman King entered Executive Session at 4:05 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to go out of Executive Session at 4:30 p.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Vice Chairman King and seconded by Commissioner Plant to go back into the Work Session at 4:32 p.m. All were in favor. A motion was made by Commissioner Plant and seconded by Commissioner Collins to appoint Mr. Theron Gay as Interim County Administrator as of July 21, 2023, with the departure of Ms. Michelle Irizarry. All were in favor.

IV. FUTURE MEETINGS

Chairman Threadgill announced the future meetings: July 25, 2023, Regular Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

V. CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The Work Session concluded at 6:18p.m.

Approved by: Majesty vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Beverly Thomas

Date: July 25, 2023