

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the April 16, 2024

Regular Commissioners Meeting

9:00 A.M.

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Eddie Rowland, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Reverend Carol Cook gave the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Tapley led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Tapley called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Proclamation Fair Housing Month

Chairman Tapley read a Proclamation Commemorating April 2024 as Fair Housing Month in Monroe County. The proclamation states April 11, 2024, marks the anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act, which enunciates a national policy of fair housing for all who live in the United States. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, and national origin. The proclamation was presented to Jenelle Craig, Agent with Properties in the South, LLC. and Miriam R. Johnson, Director of the Middle Georgia Association of Realtors.

Proclamation Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Chairman Tapley read a Proclamation Commemorating April 14-20, 2024, as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. To recognize National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week 2024 and to commend the devotion, contributions, and services of Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) E-911 Dispatchers. The Board presented the following Monroe County E-911 Dispatchers with the proclamation. Terneesha Davis, Angelica Belflower, Crystal Dotson, Junika Owens Assistant E-911 Director, Janice Watts, and Devine Conine.

Also present was Captain Mike Ogletree, EMS Director Matt Jackson, and Division Training Chief Josh Wagner.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the agenda as presented.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-April 02, 2024, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes of the April 02, 2024, regular meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

MCBOC Non-Profit Funding Policy

Finance Director Lorri Robinson stated the MCBOC Non-Profit Funding Policy was approved by the Board of Commissioners in 2021. We have been made aware by the county attorney that this could conflict with the "gratuities clause" of the Georgia Constitution Ga. Const. Art. 3 Section 6. Paragraph VI. The recommendation is to redact the MCBOC Non-Profit Funding Policy.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated Monroe County's non-profit funding policy was created as a means of determining a fair method to distribute county funds to local non-profit organizations. The policy required non-profit organizations to submit applications for funding along with descriptions of how the donated funds are being spent.

Mr. Vaughn stated this also applies to item E on the agenda.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to rescind the non-profit funding policy and to implement the new policy of non-funding.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

Conference Center Non-Profit Funding Policy

Finance Director Lorri Robinson stated currently the Conference Center has a discounted rate for Non-Profit Organizations as the following:

Monday-Thursday All Day \$500

We are recommending discontinuing the discounted rate fee for Non-Profit Organizations due to gratuities clause of the Georgia Constitution Ga. Const. Art. # Section 6. Paragraph VI. This will remove Monroe County from having any conflict with the Georgia Gratuities Clause.

Commissioner Emami motioned to rescind the discounted rates for non-profits and to revert to the original prices.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

MCES Training/Burn Facility

The Board of Commissioners approved the construction of a burn facility by the Monroe County Emergency Services to be located behind the new Smarr Fire Station on the condition the neighbors in that area are agreed to having such a facility to be operated by the MCES. Several neighbors were not in agreement with having such a facility in the area.

The High Falls American Legion Facility, located on Towaliga South Road, includes a building on 2.88 acres. AS background, this facility was donated to Monroe County on October 15, 2013, by the Ross Ivey Post 303, High Falls aka American Legion Post No. 303. This post in High Falls has been disbanded, and the new Post 303 is located in Bonita Springs, Fl. Recently, this facility was operated by the Monroe County Convention Center and used for community and individual events; however, this was discontinued on April 1, 2024, due to septic issues. Future community and individual events will be held in the new community rooms at the new High Falls Fire Station.

MCES proposes using the building for training purposes and to construct the burn facility on the back portion of the parcel. MCES has contacted numerous neighbors (very few in the area) and none have expressed concerns or disagreements with the proposed usage of this site by the MCES.

Chief Matt Jackson and Division Training Officer Josh Wagner were present for the request.

Commissioner Davis stated he is concerned if we start using the community room at the fire station for birthday parties and events that it will become a safety issue. He stated he thinks we should repair this building and continue to use it for rental events along with the fire training.

Commissioner Emami stated he had not thought of the new community room at the fire station as a kid's birthday party venue.

Chairman Tapley asked if the legion hall would be torn down.

Chief Jackson stated no, the septic tank must be repaired, and a roof will need to be put on the building eventually.

Commissioner Ambrose stated if the burn buildings are placed out there, it should not continue to be rented out.

Commissioner Emami asked how much revenue was received from renting the building.

Finance Director Lorri Robinson stated it was rented usually one day a weekend.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated a fence will be erected to separate the community garden and the bay area at the new fire station which would not allow the kids to access those areas.

Commissioner Davis asked was it possible to put a fence around the burn building and continue to use the Legion Hall as a venue.

Commissioner Ambrose stated if the burn building was going to be placed there, it needs to be taken off the books. He stated the county doesn't make enough money to pay for the maintenance to the building.

Commissioner Emami stated he didn't think the building was in that terrible shape.

Chairman Tapley asked Chief Jackson how many times a year would training burns be held.

Chief Jackson stated maybe 20 times a year.

Chairman Tapley stated after the repairs were made to the building maybe Chief Jackson and Conference Center Manager Candace Baswell could work together on scheduling.

County Manager Jim Hedges asked the Chairman if the item could be tabled for more information.

Commissioner Emami stated he feels like we are taking something away from the High Falls community without giving something back. He suggested putting it on the same property as the new fire station where someone would be onsite every day and there is a hydrant on site.

The Board agreed by general consensus to table for more information.

Subdivision Plat

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Private Road Request & Subdivision Line Change. Ms. Fortner stated the property in Adamsville Subdivision Phase II has requested a plat change and a private road to access it. This property is located off Kyndal Lane and will be broken into 3 large tracts.

The plat was approved for Adamsville Subdivision in the 2000-2005, all plats originally approved by the Board must be presented to the Board again upon any changes in lines.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve with the condition it can't be subdivided anymore without coming before the board for approval.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis encouraged everyone to stay positive and keep a smile on their faces.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he agreed with Commissioner Davis and wanted to remind everyone to have compassion for other people. He stated the zero-tolerance signs that were placed in county buildings were not intended for the library only. They were intended for all county offices and for all people that are ugly to county employees and to make people aware that it's not going to be tolerated.

Commissioner Rowland stated campaign signs in state rights-of-way are probably going to be picked up. He stated he is going to tell everyone running including himself to try to condense to people's yard or property. He stated he is going to go to the state and ask if they pick up signs to take them to the county barn to allow them to be picked up because they are expensive. He stated he asks the same thing for county workers when maintaining the county rights-of way, if its in the way, pick it up and take it to the county barn.

Commissioner Rowland stated he had someone bring up Greystone Subdivision to him. He stated she thought the Board was trying to right something that was done wrong in the past and wanted him to reiterate that none of the current commissioners were commissioners when Greystone was started.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated it's not so much campaign signs that are a nuisance as business signs are, When the mowers run over them it's not good for the mowers.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he has a constituent that has been trying to put a book at the library since January 23rd and today is April 16th and the book still has not been approved. He stated he thinks it needs to be looked into as to why the book has not been placed in the library.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami had no additional comments.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley addressed Commissioner Ambrose's comment stating the book must go through the regional library board and it doesn't go as fast as the private sector. Chairman Tapley asked Commissioner Ambrose why he didn't go to the Regional Library Board instead of coming to the Board and address the process.

Chairman Tapley stated the individual was told it would take a while for the book to be approved. He stated he understands the individual is frustrated but he doesn't think there is a behind the scenes conspiracy to keep the book out. Chairman Tapley stated he thinks Commissioner Ambrose should speak with the Regional Library Board and bring his findings back to the next meeting.

Chairman Tapley stated he agrees with Commissioner Davis and Rowland, it cost nothing to be kind.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session.

There was no executive session, therefore no action.

Adjourn

Commissioner Emami motioned to adjourn at 9:45 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk