

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the May 21, 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

Pastor Reverend Keith Harris Greater Zion Baptist Church 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-Animal Control Appreciation Week

- **Commissioners' Memorandum**

Chairman Tapley read a Proclamation Commemorating May 2024 as Animal Services Appreciation Month in Monroe County.

Shelter Manager Becky Gifford and Animal Control Officer Lisa Holthaus were present to accept the proclamation.

- **Discretionary Funds Memorandum**

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the low cost spay and neuter initiative has received \$8600.00 in grant funds to date. Each Commissioner has agreed to contribute \$1000.00 of their discretionary funds for a total of \$5000.00 to the Low Cost Spay and Neuter Program for Monroe County Animal Control.

Speaker's Appearance-High Falls Burn Building

Sharon Cloud, resident of 125 Bass Circle, stated the location of the proposed burn building is near Gilmore Creek. She stated our intention is to make sure you are making an informed decision on the placement of the burn building. Ms. Cloud stated she had a map showing where the building is in conjunction with the river and her concern is that contamination generated will run into the streams and precautions needed to be taken to protect the streams.

Ms. Cloud stated she is the current President of the High Falls Towaliga Watershed Alliance and was working on expanding the watershed program. She stated she has been authorized by the State of Georgia to test the water once a month. Ms. Cloud asked that the Watershed Alliance be allowed to receive a water testing kit through the county's Environmental Health Department as part of the group's Adopt a Stream program.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval, moving the Item "Burn Building" up on the agenda to item C.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda as with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-BOC Meeting-May 7, 2024, Regular Meeting

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2024, Regular Meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4-0-1 with Chairman Tapley abstaining due to his absence from the meeting.

Burn Building

County Manager Jim Hedges gave a presentation on the burn building.

EMS Chief Jackson spoke regarding the use of the Fire Academy burn building. Chief Jackson stated Monroe County has a great relationship with GPSTC and said it frequently trains firefighters there. He said GPSTC stays full much of the time due to the number of statewide counties and municipalities using it and MCES having its own burn building will allow its firefighters to train during times when GPSTC is not available.

Chief Jackson stated he is perfectly fine finding a secondary site that is more suitable for everyone involved and is working with Commissioner Rowland to find a different location.

Joanne Dibble resident of 3720 High Falls Road asked what the necessity of this facility is and asked if this would be a revenue generator.

Chief Jackson replied that it was a necessity to train Monroe County's firefighters, and it would not generate revenue, however, it would help Monroe County's ISO rating.

William Burnham resident of Weavers Lakefront Road in Butts County asked if the water runoff from the burn training will be captured in a retention pond before running into the rivers.

Chief Jackson replied there is not one currently planned but would comply with the requirements of the Community Development Department.

Mr. Burnham asked what fire-retardant materials will be used.

Chief Jackson replied there would be no pretreated lumber and only kiln dried natural wood pallets would be used for the training.

Wesley Arnold resident of Hillcrest Lane stated he used to be a volunteer fireman and agrees this is needed but not in a residential area and that close to streams. Mr. Arnold asked what the state regulations for a fire training facility near a stream were and what type of abatements are required near streams.

Chief Jackson replied there would be limited runoff.

Commissioner Emami stated engineers would determine those requirements, and Chief Jackson is not going to know those types of questions regarding the environment.

Alan Gibbs, resident of 31 Zellner Road asked how often the building would be used.

Chief Jackson replied it would be used once maybe twice a quarter for all three shifts. Chief Jackson stated it is not going to be used every day.

After an extensive discussion, no action was taken.

Towaliga Circuit Budget 2024/2025

The Towaliga Judicial Circuit Budget is shared by Butts County, Lamar County, and Monroe County. Costs are allocated by population. For the budget cycle covering 2024/2025, Monroe County’s share will increase by \$73,436; \$39,455 in 2024, and \$33,981 in 2024. The additional funding for 2024 will come from the Contingency Fund.

Finance Director Lorri Robinson-Byrd presented the following proposed 2024/2025 Towaliga Judicial Budget.

District Attorney’s Budgets

Total Budgets	Allocation for Counties		Agreed Upon %					
	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2024	FY 2025				
Judges	\$328,995	\$335,795	Butts	\$483,023	\$513,937	Butts	35%	35%
D.A.’s	\$796,779	\$869,690	Lamar	\$348,551	\$371,033	Lamar	26%	26%
Juvenile Judges	\$112,278	\$119,945	Monroe	\$529,479	\$563,460	Monroe	39%	39%
Juvenile Counsel	\$123,000	\$123,000						
Total	\$1,361,052	\$1,448,430		\$1,361,052	\$1,448,430		100%	100%
Total Inc/Dec	\$101,027	\$87,378		\$101,027	\$87,378			
Monroe Co Inc/Dec				\$39,455	\$33,981			

Public Defenders Budget

	Total Budgets		Allocation for Counties			Agreed Upon %		
	FY 2024	FY 2025		FY 2024	FY 2025		FY 2024	FY 2025
Public Defender	\$787,781	\$813,633	Butts	\$301,414	\$311,093	Butts	35%	35%
Juvenile P.D.	\$64,151	\$65,658	Lamar	\$319,202	\$226,202	Lamar	26%	26%
			Monroe	\$331,316	\$341,956	Monroe	39%	39%
Total	\$851,932	\$879,291		\$851,932	\$879,291		100%	100%
Total Inc/Dec	\$105,108	\$27,359		\$105,108	\$27,359			
Monroe Inc/Dec				\$40,876	\$10,640			

Accountability Courts Budget

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Allocation for counties	FY 2024	FY 2025
	Drug Court	\$126,000	\$126,000	Butts	\$70,000
Veterans Court	\$42,000	\$42,000	Lamar	\$70,000	\$70,000
Mental Health Ct	\$42,000	\$42,000	Monroe	\$70,000	\$70,000
Total	\$210,000	\$210,000			

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Towaliga Judicial Circuit Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 5-0.

2024 Budget Amendment

Finance Director Lorri Robinson presented the following budget amend for the 2024 budget for approval:

Budget Amendment-Need BOC approval

Department	Description	Amount to	Amount From
Revenue	Other Revenues-Rec Donations		\$200
County Admin #1111	Other Supplies		\$1602
Recreation	Advertising from Rec Donations	\$200	
IT	Computer Services/Supplies	\$1602	
Commissioners	Contingency-Vacant Positions		\$77,020.77
EMS	7 new Hires-3 Terms	\$38,814.28	
Sheriff	4 new hires-3 Terms	\$32,748.21	
Extensions	County Supplement	\$5,458.28	
	Total Budget Amendment	\$78,822.77	\$78,822.77

LD JA 5-0

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$78,822.77.

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

Water Billing Process

Monroe County submitted an email to the board regarding the water billing process. Mr. Byrne stated he is not receiving his water bills in a timely manner and asked the board to discontinue charging the 2.9% fee for credit cards.

Finance Director Lorri Robinson reviewed with the board the water billing process.

Following a Board discussion no action was taken.

Region 5 EMS Council Appointment

Monroe County is represented on the Region 5 EMS Council by Chief Matt Jackson, and Firefighter/Paramedic Jesse Suggs. Mr. Suggs term expires on June 1, 2024, and Chief Jackson

is recommending Captain Kristen Lyndall who is over EMS operations for Emergency Services and would be a better fit at this time.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to appoint Captain Kristen Lyndall to the Region 5 EMS Council for a four-year term.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 5-0.

Local Road Assistance Grant Recommendation

Kim Stokes has developed a scope-of-work for road improvements funded by a combination of TSPLOST funds and Local Road Assistance Grant of \$911,000 that was recently distributed by Governor Kemp. Roads included in the scope-of-work include McCommon Road, Shi Road, Reedy Creek Road, Rivoli Road, Boxankle Road, and Faulkner Road. The work includes going to bid for base preparation to be funded with TSPLOST and in-house paving to be performed by the County. Total cost is estimated at \$2,588,947.

Specifically:

- Base preparation by 3rd party-\$1,689,558 from TSPLOST funds; and
- Inhouse paving-\$911,000 for the LRA grant.

Funding

Cost		Reclaim Cement Slab			Asphalt by County			Total			
Dist	Road	Begin	End	SY	Total	Unit	SY	Tons/ Asphalt	Total	Cost	District
				TSPLOST FUNDING			LRA GRANT FUNDING				
1	McCommon	22+50 from 83	Blue Store	16,217	\$259,466.67	\$16.00	15,444	1699	\$135,911	\$395,377.78	
											\$395,377.78
2	SHI	US-41	Maynards Mill	37,661	\$579,387.32	\$15.38	35,778	3,936	\$314,846	\$894,233.28	
2	Reedy Creek	Various		3,056	\$58,548.29	\$19.16	2,903	319	\$25,548	\$84,096.45	
											\$347,546.48
3	Rivoli			14,369	\$227,421.64	\$15.83	13,651	1,502	\$120,125	\$347,546.48	
											\$347,546.48
4	Boxankle	Johnstonville	Mt. Gilead Ch	28,000	\$427,215.70	\$15.26	26,600	2926	\$234,080	\$661,295.70	
4	Faulkner	Teagle	SR-42	8,239	\$137,518.88	\$16.69	7,827	861	\$80,490	\$218,008.88	
											\$879,304.58
Total		Projects		107,542	\$1,689,558		102,203	11,242	\$911,000	\$2,600,559	\$2,600,559

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the scope-of-work for road improvements.

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

Staffing Request-Road Paving Crew

Kim Stokes has put forward the request to hire an additional 9 employees designated full-time as the paving crew. Estimated cost is \$528,000 annually to be funded from TSPLOST.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve Kim Stokes' request to hire 9 employees for a paving crew.

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

UDO Amendment-Recreational Vehicles (1st Reading)

Much has been debated relating to Recreational Vehicles as currently contained in the United Development Ordinance. County Attorney Ben Vaughn has developed, at the request of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners, an amendment to the UDO.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented the amendment to the Board of Commissioners and asked them to review. Mr. Vaughn stated this is a 1st reading and no action is needed tonight.

Forsyth Annexation

The City of Forsyth has received an application for annexation of certain properties into the City of Forsyth adjacent to the other properties within the City of Forsyth and for zoning and re-zoning of the properties upon annexation or existing in the City of Forsyth.

Commissioner Emami recused himself from the matter.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the County has 45 days to object.

Sherrye Battle, resident of Cedar Terrace Lane, infrastructure is bad. Ms. Battle stated the streets are too narrow for increased traffic.

Chairman Tapley explained to Ms. Battle the City of Forsyth is doing the annexing.

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to table the matter until the City of Forsyth hears it at their next meeting and makes their decision.

Commissioner Davis motioned to table the annexation until after the City of Forsyth's meeting. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Chairman Tapley stated it would be better if the County sent in their objection so the city could weigh the County's objection when making their decision.

Commissioner Davis stated he had spoken to numerous neighbors of the proposed development, and they don't want townhomes at this site. Commissioner Davis then motioned to send an objection to the annexation.

The motion again failed for lack of a second.

Following additional discussion, the Board took no action on the annexation.

Library Board Appointments

At the January organizational meeting, the Board of Commissioners did not appoint, or reappoint, two members of the Library Board. The BOC requested the Library Board to consider reducing the number of appointees to Library Board from 11 members to a lower number which would require an amendment to the Library Constitution and Bylaws. The Library Board did not agree to this amendment and accordingly, no vote was taken by the Library Board.

The term of appointment for Jenny Caldwell and Jane Pennington expired on December 31, 2023. The Library Board has recommended the appointment of Joan Whitehead Freeman and Joe Reed to fill the two vacant positions.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated what has not been addressed is Section 1 of the library Bylaws which states members appointed by the Forsyth City Council and the Monroe County Board of Education are required to financially support the library on a regular basis. The library's 2024 budget is \$253,149 and 1/11th equates to \$23,000 as a recommended contribution in support of the Library by the City of Forsyth and the Monroe County Board of Education. Following a Board discussion, Chairman Tapley motioned to appoint Barbara Dye and Meredith Adams to the Library Board.

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

Following additional discussion, Commissioner Ambrose then motioned to eliminate the Library Board appointments for the Board of Education and the City of Forsyth.

Chairman Tapley asked the Board to postpone deciding until County Attorney Ben Vaughn could do some additional research.

The Board agreed by general consensus to table the discussion until the next meeting.

Subdivision Plat-Strickland Woods Phase II

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a preliminary subdivision plat. The property owner is PTW Properties, Brian Wesley. The subdivision's name is Strickland

Woods Phase II. The application is for 12 proposed lots on 59.2 acres and is located on Map 052 Parcel 018.

Ms. Fortner stated it is not being requested for approval to be signed and platted today unless the Board feels comfortable moving on at the end of the presentation.

This preliminary plat is the first larger subdivision to come forth since the approval of the U.D.O.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the plat contingent upon the County Attorney's review to ensure compliance with the UDO.

Chairman Tapley seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Ambrose opposed.

Discretionary Funds Contribution

Commissioner George Emami requested a listing of Department Heads reporting to the County Manager. Upon providing this information, Commissioner Emami proposed contributing \$1,000 from his discretionary funds to each Department Head for things outfitting of their departments with the balance to be sued by Chief Matt Jackson for the outfitting of the new High Falls Fire Station.

This action will transfer \$20,000 to the Department Heads and approximately \$50,000 to MCES. Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the discretionary funds contribution.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 5-0.

Public Comments

Yvonne Stuart resident of Hwy 41 South thanked the board for appointing people to the library board. Ms. Stuart stated the library board is not selecting books they make policy. Ms. Stuart also commented that she is not receiving water bill emails.

Commissioner' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated May is Mental Health Awareness month and encouraged everyone to look out for each other. Commissioner Davis stated men sometimes want to hide our issues.

Commissioner Davis asked the public and everyone to remember there are always three sides to every story. If you read something you are not sure about, come to us and we will get you the truth. Let's give each other the respect we deserve.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated Superior Court Clerk Lindsey Taylor had someone that had a property tax issue and a disagreement with the Board of Assessors. They were told they would need to go to the Board of Equalization, the problem is we must have 5 members and we currently only have two. Commissioner Rowland stated he is now appealing to anyone that wants to do something for the county to become a member of the Board of Equalization. The position has a variety of requirements to serve on the board. Commissioner Rowland stated he is appealing to Monroe County residents to help Superior Court Clerk Lindsey Taylor fill these positions.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated one of his constituents still hasn't been able to get his book submitted to the library.

Commissioner Ambrose expressed his appreciation for Public Works Director Kim Stokes.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami announced his resignation date as November 3, 2024. Commissioner Emami stated he wanted to stay until the end of the year but was told by elections officials that he would have to vacate prior to November 5th election for his replacement to be chosen on that ballot. Commissioner Emami thanked County Attorney Ben Vaughn for his assistance with the resignation process. Commissioner Emami stated I didn't want to leave the county in a lurch. He stated there was still a lot of open business at the time I decided to do it. Commissioner Emami read a passage from his journal.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley had no additional comments.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session.

There was no executive session, therefore no action.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 11:32 a.m.

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

MCBOC draft Minutes of May 21, 2024, meeting
MCBOC approved.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk