

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the September 17, 2024

Regular Commissioners Meeting

9:00 A.M.

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman-Not Present

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

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was held for Monroe County Deputy Michael Norris that was killed in the line of duty in 2014 and for the recent Apalachee School Shootings in Winder, Georgia on September 4th.

Welcome

Vice Chairman Eddie Rowland welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Davis gave the invocation.

Pledge

Vice Chairman Eddie Rowland led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Eddie Rowland called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Vice Chairman Eddie Rowland presented the agenda for approval with the deletion of item D.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda as amended.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4-0.

Approve Minutes-September 03, 2024, Regular Meeting

Vice Chairman Eddie Rowland presented the minutes of the September 03, 2024, Regular Meeting for approval.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the minutes with the usual 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Dan Pitts Septic System

During the construction of the Dan Pitts Road extension, the existing septic system was damaged at no fault by the contractor. Dan Wallace and Kim Stokes have evaluated options to repair and extend the existing system and in consultation with Gina Smith, Monroe County Environmental Health Manager, the best solution is the installation of the Eljen GSF Geotextile Sand Filter, a proprietary system to Eljen Corporation. This system will be recommended and described by Dan Wallace, Triple Point Engineering.

Mr. Wallace stated he would like to give an update on the Dan Pitts Road extension at the recreation department. Mr. Wallace stated he was able to take \$65,000 off the original quoted price and after all invoicing there will be \$38,000 left in the project. Mr. Wallace stated we have some change orders that have come up due to bad soil along the way and the contractors have been asked to do some extra grassing. Mr. Wallace stated during the last 100 yards of the road we hit a septic drain field. Mr. Wallace stated with the change order there is a net increase of \$21,500 but what is not included is the new septic field. Mr. Wallace stated he is not asking at this point for the cost of the drain field because they are still looking at places for the new drain field to be installed. Mr. Wallace stated today he is asking for \$21,592.87 plus approval of an additional change order with no set amount to cover the cost for the drain field.

Commissioner Emami asked about dropping the tank and connecting to the sewer system adjacent to the property. Commissioner Emami stated if we spend that much money, we need to do the entire property and pump into the sewer system. Commissioner Emami stated he does not support a septic system for this amount of money.

Commissioner Rowland stated the property was inspected for a landfill several years ago and now the soil is terrible, Commissioner Rowland asked what happened.

Mr. Wallace stated in the past all that was required was a perk test and now a soil study is required, he continued stating technology and requirements have changed over the years.

Following a board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the change order presented for \$21,592.87 and for the engineers to come back to the board for approval with the price on the sewer system and engineering cost.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

LMIG Project Change Order-Riata Subdivision

This item was removed from the agenda.

Animal Control IGA-City of Culloden

The Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Culloden for Animal Control has expired. Recently, Culloden has experienced numerous complaints relating to “wild dogs” knocking over trash and being nuisances. The City of Culloden has notified Commissioner Eddie Rowland they wish to enter into a new IGA for Animal Control by the county within the city limits of Culloden.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the IGA with the City of Culloden.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Old Sheriff Training Building

With the completion of the new Training Facility at the Sheriff’s Department, the Sheriff has requested the old training trailer be removed. County Manager Jim Hedges stated he inquired with EMS Chief Matt Jackson, in using the trailer as living quarters at a MCES substation, unfortunately, he is not interested. Mr. Hedges stated his recommendation is to declare the old Sheriff Training Trailer as surplus and authorize Public Works to demolish and transfer the debris to the inert landfill.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to declare the old Sheriff Training Trailer as surplus and sell via sealed bid with a required refundable \$1,500 deposit to be refunded if the trailer is removed within 45 days.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Monroe County Retirement Plan Amendment

County Manager Jim Hedges stated one of the most common questions he is asked is “when will the county adjust the retirement plan?” The retirement calculation is 1.75% x years of service x average

compensation for the past 5 years. The adjustment referenced by employees is the 1.75%. Reports of some counties adjusting the multiplier to as high as 2.25%; however, that has not been confirmed. Within Monroe County, we have 295 fulltime employees; of which 130 or 44% are vested with 5 years or more of service to the county. And only 76 employees, or 26% have more than 10 years of service. While I believe we attract top talent in our hiring practice, we have a low retention rate. Raising the multiplier in the retirement calculation will be a great recruiting tool and should raise the retention rate. ACCG Retirement Services have provided three scenarios, and the corresponding cost associated with amending the multiplier.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve for discussion.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like additional information to change the tiers to the following:

0-5 years would remain at 1.75%

5-10 years-2%

10-20 years-2.25%

20 and above 2.50%

Commissioner Emami stated he would like to see the percentages for other counties to ensure we are not being frivolous with taxpayer funds.

Following a Board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose rescinded his motion.

The Board agreed by General consensus to postpone any action to allow for additional information to be brought back to the next meeting.

“Wesley’s Law”

Senate Bill 395 was signed into law by Governor Kemp in April 2024 and is referred to as “Wesley’s Law”. There are a number of provisions in this new law and Monroe County is affected by this law by requiring 3 doses of Narcan, a medication designed to rapidly reverse the effects of life-threatening opioid emergency, in all government buildings. IN addition to having this medication available, Chief Matt Jackson recommends installation of automatic external defibrillators at each location. Estimated cost is \$50,000 to \$55,000 and can be funded from the receipts received by Monroe County from the class-action opioid abatement settlement.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the procurement of the devices and to approve the training requirements.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Board of Assessors' Appointment

Mr. Tyler Wood's appointment to the Monroe County Board of Assessors will expire on October 5, 2024. This is a three-year term, and the Board of Assessors is recommending Mr. Woods be reappointed.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to reappoint Tyler Woods to the Tax Assessors Board for a three-year term.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments

Julie Pressley, resident of 737 Sutton Road, states she appreciates the boards service to the county. Ms. Pressley stated she is the aunt of David Fullmore and would like to know what the County Commissioners are going to do to address the recent situation. Ms. Pressley stated she is livid at the EMS post airing the information that should not have been out there and asked if the commissioners are planning on following up.

Commissioner Rowland stated there has been a lot of discussion on what Ms. Pressley brought up. Commissioner Rowland stated he loves this county and loves how we can have a discussion and not necessarily agree. Commissioner Rowland stated he is personally very close to the fire service because he has a son that works there and with that in mind, he has asked to step away from the situation moving forward and has asked Commissioner Davis to take the lead.

Commissioner Davis thanked Ms. Pressley and stated the Commissioners have informally agreed to seek out an independent professional organization to do a thorough evaluation of MCES, including equipment, vehicles, buildings, permanent staff, volunteer staff, management, policies, etc.

Commissioner Davis said he has already discussed the need for an independent evaluator with several consulting firms.

Commissioner' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated to the citizens of Monroe County he is a very positive person he prays that each and every one in the community stays positive. He stated Facebook comments have been tiring and he calls them keyboard warriors. He asks each of you come to the board and let's have a discussion. He stated he goes to conferences, and we are considered the Public Safety Capital of Georgia, but we are quickly becoming the negativity capital of Georgia. He stated lets all work together and change that.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he wanted to address the LMIG project that was taken off the agenda. Commissioner Rowland stated these commissioners up here can do some dumb things occasionally and this was my dumb thing. Commissioner Rowland stated the process of discussing Johnstonville road paving was underway, and he thought we are already on Johnstonville Road and so let's do a little bit of Riata but then he realized each road has arterial roads off the side and we have to evaluate each and every road that comes off the existing projects and do the worst roads first. Commissioner Rowland stated his intention was not to cherry pick. Commissioner Rowland stated he apologizes to the citizens of Riata that he told he would pave the roads but the right thing to do is to evaluate all the roads first.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he agrees with Commissioner Davis regarding all the hype going on, on Facebook. Commissioner Ambrose stated regarding the negative comments being made on the purchase of Tahoe's to replace trucks, Commissioner Ambrose stated all of that's garbage, all we hear is negative. Commissioner Ambrose stated regarding the negative comments concerning the County Attorney, he has saved us money and he stays on top of things and keeps us informed. Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to say a thank you to our County Attorney. Commissioner Ambrose stated we are in the best financial shape this county has ever been in. He stated everyone complains about the County Manager and spending but the money we have in the SPLOST accounts if we don't spend it by a certain date you lose it. Commissioner Ambrose stated he appreciates County Manager Jim Hedges, County Clerk Janet Abbott as well as the rest of the employees and he looks forward to working with everyone for the next two years.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to introduce Alan Gibbs the incoming chairman that will be starting January 2025. He also introduced Doug Williams and Al Turner, stating these are two candidates running for the district 4 seat.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated its interesting you hear a lot of different sides about the same thing and there are elements of truth in anything and the hardest thing to do is not to jump to conclusions in situations. Commissioner Emami stated when situations like these happen it is our job to fly at 30,000 feet and to not be so entrenched in the details that we miss something. Commissioner Emami stated he has had at least 10 to 15 phone calls from fire related people and the people that had the most ideas

about things that needed to be changed about the county were ex-employees. Commissioner Emami stated it is also our responsibility to listen to leadership.

Commissioner Emami thanked David Fullmore for his years of service to Monroe County.

Commissioner Emami stated conflicts can occur between managers and employees and there are always two sides to every story which makes the truth a little blurry sometimes. Commissioner Emami stated chain of command and fair processes are critical for Commissioners to respect and follow. He stated some critics want Commissioners to fire EMS Chief Matt Jackson over his handling of Mr. Fullmore, but he doesn't plan to take action against Chief Jackson or County Manager Jim Hedges over this situation. Commissioner Emami stated if he did that for every person that was upset about a decision their department head made, we would have an anarchy in this county.

Commissioner Emami then urged citizens to be careful where they get their information stating there are social media commenters who seek to divide Monroe County. Commissioner Emami stated Monroe County has a bigger problem with negativity on social media than other counties he has been around and said it could destroy this county if people don't put a stop to it. Commissioner Emami urged everyone to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley was not present.

Executive Session-

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session.

There was no executive session therefore no action.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 10:24 a.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 4-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk