

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Commissioner Meeting Minutes
October 15th, 2013
7:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Jay Matthews called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. Present for the meeting was Vice-Chairman Bennie Horton, Commissioner Charles Glass, Commissioner Van Baker, Commissioner Nancy Thrash, County Administrator Robert Zellner, Financial Analyst Carlette Davidson and County Attorney Scott Mayfield.

II. Agenda Amendment

Commissioner Glass made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Horton seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

III. Minutes Approval

Commissioner Horton made a motion to approve the following minutes.

- a. September 11th, 2013-Regular Commissioner Meeting
- b. September 17th, 2013-Special Called Meeting

Commissioner Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

IV. Proclamation

Commissioner Glass presented a Proclamation to three retired teachers of Lamar County School System, Monica Walters, Linda Olivier, and Brenda Ross declaring November 3, 2013 as Retired Educator's Day in Georgia and called upon the citizens of Lamar County to observe that day in an appropriate manner honoring retired educators.

V. National Guard Property Proposal

Barnesville City Council member Mark Stone addressed the Chairman and the Board as an individual in regards to signing a lease with the State and the Georgia National Guard. Mr. Stone stated that there is a possible opportunity for the county to lease both the facility and the acreage that could be used by the recreation department. Mr. Stone stated that currently the building is used by the Lamar Activity Center and the Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program. Mr. Stone introduced the Executive Director of the program, Angela Mack.

Ms. Mack gave an overview of the program to the Board. Ms. Mack stated that the program is partnered with Morehouse School of Medicine. The program serves over 200 kids across 5 counties. Ms. Mack stated that 97% of the students are promoted to the next grade level and that daily education support, tutoring, and CRCT preparation is provided. The students have access to medical, dental and vision services along with the opportunity to open a bank account. Some of the students actually run a computer store in which they repair and sell computers. Ms. Mack concluded by saying that all of the students are being trained for college and that college tours are also provided to the students.

Mayor Peter Banks addressed the Board stating that he personally applauds the essential work of the Activity Center. Mayor Banks stated that the State of Georgia bought the property for \$260,000.00. When it was no longer used by the National Guard the State leased the property to the Georgia Department of Defense. The Georgia Department of Defense leased the property to the Lamar Activity Center which was funded by the Morehouse School of Medicine through a series of grants. The Activity Center provides after school programs, dance, arts and recreations to approximately 90 children in Lamar County. Mayor Banks stated that in order for the activity center to continue to receive grants from Morehouse School of Medicine a local public body must own the property then lease the facility to the Lamar Activity Center. The State would like to lease the property for \$600 dollars for a period of three years which would allow the Lamar Activity Center and the Carrera Program to continue with their daily routines. Mayor Banks stated that at the end of the lease the county would acquire the 26 acres of land for little or no cost to the county. Mayor Banks stated that by leasing the property it would give the county time to investigate all the issues with the aging building including if there is actually asbestos in the building and that the land could possibly be used by the recreation department. Mayor Banks also stated that under the proposed lease agreement that the Lamar Activity Center would continue to maintain the building and would seek grants to assist with the necessary upgrades.

The Board addressed Mayor Banks, Mr. Stone and Ms. Mack in regards to leasing the property. Chairman Matthews stated that the roof leaks, and that it is probably full of asbestos and mildew therefore some the buildings will probably have to be torn down. The Chairman stated that this would be a huge liability for the County. Chairman Matthews stated that the Lamar Activity Center needs to see if there are other properties available in the area that they could lease. Commissioner Baker stated he would need to see a copy of the original lease.

Barbara Minter, James Holloway, Shirley Brown-Doggett, Dorothy Carter and James E. Fletcher addressed the Board with their feelings towards the old Booker High School. They view the property as historical to the black community and would like for the county to purchase the property in order to save the school and provide a place for families and children to go.

Annetta Berry with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership group addressed the Board by stating that she would like to see the historical value of the building and the property saved and suggested that alumni of the Booker High School and possible CDBG grants be reviewed so that tax payer money is not used.

Preston Thompson addressed the board stating that he did not want the tax payers having the financial responsibility of paying for this property. He requested that emotions be left out of the decision making process.

Vice-Chairman Horton stated that he remembered going to a two room school and when he went to Booker High School he thought he had died and gone to heaven. He stated that he hated to see it as a black and white but added that it really is a black issue since it was a black school. Vice-Chairman Horton said that you can do anything that you want to with hard work and used his musical career as an example. He said that he would like to see the school building saved but that if no one purchases the property the buildings will fall down. Commissioner Horton stated that he is not in favor of using taxpayer money to save the buildings but that maybe they get the community to barbeque some chickens to help pay for the renovations.

VI. Pre-Bill Mobile Homes

Tax Assessor Jeannie Haddock, Tax Commissioner Andrea Anthony addressed the board in regards to dilapidated mobile homes that are unlivable. Both Tax Assessor Haddock and Tax Commissioner Anthony stated that about 30 mobile homes are abandoned, and many of these mobile homes are on property that is owned by someone other than the person who owns the mobile home. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that the mobile homes be condemned and sold for scrap metal. Tax Commissioner Anthony stated that these homes are becoming crack and meth houses. The Board agreed to have Code Enforcer, Wimpy Vaughn to send letters to the list of property owners that have these mobile homes on their property. County Attorney Mayfield stated that if the property owner is looking at a fine they will have it cleaned up.

VII. Milner Milling Tax Refund

Holly Patel with the Tax Assessors office presented a request to the Board for a tax refund for \$49,000.00 from Milner Millings. The inventory taxes were reported and paid based on the return value that Milner Milling reported. Ms. Patel stated that the new owner has audited the books and feels that the inventory taxes were reported incorrectly. The Board requested that the request be turned over to County Attorney, Scott Mayfield.

VIII. Board Appointments

The Lamar County Republican Party reappointed Mrs. Alice Ramseur to serve on the Board of Elections and Registration. Her new term will begin on January 1, 2014. The Lamar County Democratic Party reappointed Mr. Harold Ivey to serve on the Board of Elections and Registration. His new term will begin on January 1, 2014. Vice-Chairman Horton made a motion to recognize the appointments made by the Republican and Democratic Parties. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

IX. Resolution 2013-07-A Resolution to State Lamar County's Opposition to Proposed title ad Valorem Tax Rule Changes.

Commissioner Baker made a motion to send a resolution to the Georgia Department of Revenue opposing a proposed rule that will reduce the title ad valorem tax that a buy-here-pay-here auto dealer charges from 6.5 percent to 4.0 percent. Commissioner Glass seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

X. Public Comments

Beverly Eskridge of 138 Holmes Street Barnesville, Georgia gave her monthly Lamar County Humane Society Report. Ms. Eskridge invited everyone to an old-fashioned Halloween carnival from 4-8 p.m. Saturday at the old Barnesville Academy gym. Ms. Eskridge invited the community stating that there would be 25-cent activity tickets for each event including food concessions, costume contests, old-fashioned games, a cupcake walk, auction and door prizes.

Angela Mack of 408 Highway 41 South, Barnesville, Georgia addressed the board stating that she has worked at the Lamar County Activity Center for over 21 years and that she would like to stay in Lamar County. Ms. Mack says that the National Guard inspects the building once a year making sure that they are safe. Ms. Mack currently operates an after school program, a thrift Store and would like to see the building saved in honor of the Booker High School alumni. Ms. Mack concluded by saying that her program has generated over \$300,000 dollars in revenue with another million dollars in grant monies.

James Brown, former Board Member of the Lamar County Activity Center addressed the board stating that they had the opportunity to acquire the property for \$1.00. He further stated that the programs are run through grants and that is not a tax payer burden. He also stated that every black person in the community went through Booker High School when it was open and he would like to see it saved. Mr. Brown told the Board that there is much potential for the facility and the property.

XI. Round Table

Vice-Chairman Horton gave thanks to the late E.P. Roberts and Mr. Bush for teaching him life lessons back in 1956. He also said that he would like to see the old Booker High School saved but not at the expense of the taxpayer.

Commissioner Baker requested that Mayor Banks find the original document where the government was responsible for keeping up the building and also that he find the original lease that the State has with the National Guard.

IX. Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Horton made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business Meeting at approximately 8:40 p.m. Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jay Matthews, Chairman

Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

Charles Glass, Commissioner

Van Baker, Commissioner

Nancy M. Thrash, Commissioner

Attest:

Robert Zellner, County Administrator