

Lamar County Commissioners Special Called Meeting
Large Conference Room Administration Building
August 19, 2010
10:00 A.M.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Lamar, State of Georgia, held a Special Called Meeting in the Large Conference Room at the Administration Building on Thursday, August 19, 2010 at 10:00 A.M. Present for the meeting were Chairman Jay Matthews, Vice-Chairman Bennie Horton, Commissioner George R. Brown, Commissioner Nancy M. Thrash and Commissioner Jimmy Hearn.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jay Matthews.

Chairman Matthews opened the meeting by stating the Commissioners are looking at ways to reduce spending and reduce the 2010 budget through reduction of services and drastic cuts. He further stated he has learned from all the phone calls and listening to the public that the people would rather cut services than raise taxes. Commissioner Thrash agreed.

Commissioner Bennie Horton proposed a 10% cut across the board for one year, add a fire protection tax and possibly raise the millage rate by 1 mill. Mr. Chairman said there will be no millage rate increase if we implement a new fire tax. Commissioner Brown wants to verify that we can charge Gordon College for each dorm.

Chairman Matthews said the City of Barnesville will be pro rated differently than Milner and unincorporated Lamar County due to the City fire protection. Ambulance fee and first responders can be charged the same across the board. We can charge entire ambulance budget, fire department budget and first responders budget in the tax. We cannot generate more in the tax than we pay in the budget.

Commissioner Thrash suggested the County look into combining services. For example, move EMA under the fire department and give EMA space to the fire department and eventually have an Emergency Management Department that also includes E-911. She stated the county could possibly save \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year by combining these services. Chairman Matthews agreed that consolidation of services should be considered.

The discussion of cutting the Health Department was brought up and led to many comments by the commissioners. Commissioner Horton feels the citizens do not want the Health Dept. cut. Chairman Matthews clarified by stating the Health Dept.'s budget would be reduced, not cut out altogether. Commissioner Thrash asked if the County could recover some of its revenue by implementing a co-pay. Commissioner Brown stated they already have a co-pay and increased their fees. Commissioner Thrash commented if the health department is following rules sent down by the state that denies taxpayers services at the health department then we should pull all of our funding from the health department and let the state fund it. Commissioner Hearn stated the Health Dept. is already funded by the State through state taxes. The county is only

liable for the building and utilities. The supplement we give them is just generosity from Lamar County.

Mr. Chairman moved on down the list to discuss reduced funding or possible eliminations. Mr. Patterson injected for informational purposes that constitutional officer salaries are set by the state and cannot be decreased by the county. The county can only cut their budget. Commissioner Horton said he would like to ask the constitutional officers to volunteer to give up 5% of their salary. Commissioner Hearn commented if we cut 10% in salaries then don't cut employee's insurance benefits. Chairman Matthews stated a representative from the county's insurance carrier will be meeting with county personnel toward the end of the month to discuss possible changes to the county's insurance program. These changes will help the county save money as well as provide adequate insurance coverage for its employees.

Commissioner Nancy M. Thrash requested to discuss DFACS. She stated DFACS is a state program. Let the state find the money to fund it. By doing so, the county could save \$25,000 in the County budget.

Commissioner Jimmy Hearn brought up the discussion of indigent defense already over budget. Commissioner George R. Brown reminded everyone the county is responsible for paying for indigent defense. By law, every person brought to court will be represented. Chairman Matthews suggested we send bills back to the courts and let them tell us we still have to pay but at least they know where they stand in their budget and how much it takes to fund them a year.

There was a general discussion about lawn care service. The question was raised about using inmate labor for our lawn care needs. Inmates are not allowed to work with lawn mowers, weed eaters, etc. Plus the county would have to pay someone to oversee them. The point was also made that we cannot force any inmate that has not been convicted to work. Commissioner Thrash suggested we cut \$19,000 in lawn care and give the money to the recreation department. Commissioner Brown stated if we do that the county will have to hire more people, buy more equipment and the gas, plus pay for the repairs of the equipment and have a way to haul it all over the county. Mr. Chairman agreed.

Mr. Kent Kingsley offered several suggestions on how to cut the county budget and how to encourage the Constitutional Officers to stay within their budget.

A representative from the Health Dept. clarified their services and said that the proposed cut in their budget will not cause them to close down. Also, they are already making adjustments to their budget to cut spending.

Mr. Patterson read aloud the proposed cuts and savings for the remainder of 2010 and for 2011.

Commissioner Thrash stated that although she supports the drug court, she thinks the County should cut their budget 10% also. There was a general agreement.

Chairman Matthews scheduled the next workshop meeting for Monday, August 23, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. in the Administration Building, 2nd floor, large conference room.

There being no further business to discuss Commissioner Hearn made a motion for the meeting to adjourn at 11:55 a.m. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous decision.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jay Matthews, Chairman

Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

George R. Brown, Member

Jimmy Hearn, Member

Nancy M. Thrash, Member

ATTEST:

Wayne Patterson
County Administrator

