

Washington County Board of Commissioners

Regular Meeting

May 11, 2023

9:00am

Commissioners Present: Horace Daniel, Doug Watkins, Bobby Jackson, James Hitchcock, Frank Simmons

Prayer

Pledge

Approval of Previous Minutes

- Commissioner Simmons made a motion to begin the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Watkins. The motion was passed unanimously.

Bills

- Chairman Daniel read the bills to be ratified in the following categories and amounts:
 - Administrative & Other \$423,172.86
 - Road Department \$53,722.73
 - Sheriff's Office & Jail \$125,542.75
 - Courthouse \$39,159.35
 - EMA \$3,012.98
 - E-911 \$1,589.61
 - Landfill \$74,639.45
- Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the expenditures. Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed unanimously.

Road Department Update

- Mr. Holmes stated that the Road Department are focusing on replacing pipes in wet areas. He stated that pipes in the area known as the duck roost will be replaced as pipes there have corroded or broken. Commissioner Hitchcock inquired as to what is causing the constant damage on the dirt roads in that area, to which Mr. Holmes stated that loggers with heavy weights and then atv's and other vehicles are using the roads to play in. He stated that the patching machine has arrived and that a crew will begin to patch on paved roads that have potholes.

Appointments

- Gun Range
 - David and Willette Davenport
 - Mr. and Mrs. Davenport both gave disapproval of a gun range that has established in their neighborhood. They stated that it is a nuisance and could not understand why anyone would establish a gun range in the location. They expressed concerns about safety for everyone in the surrounding area, as well as rules and regulations they need to follow. Their greatest concerns were in regards to stray bullets and the constant noise when someone fires.
 - Tony Tillman

- Mr. Tillman stated that he owns the property that is next to the gun range and that he was against the gun range being there. He stated that he uses the property to camp and to recreational activities with his children. He went on to say that he planned to build a home there in the future, but now will reconsider that due to the gun range. He stated that the gun range will make it difficult for him to sale to anyone else due to the noise and safety issues, as well as a possible depreciation in value.
- Ms. Lyle Lansdale and Ms. Kelly Etheridge
 - Ms. Etheridge began by requesting that the gun range be relocated to a more remote area much further away from homes. She stated that some bullets can travel up to 3 miles and that the design of the range should have considered the adjacent landowners to a greater degree. She stated that, in addition to the safety concerns already mentioned, that the lead will contaminate the soil and eventually drinking water, and then discussed the negative effects that the noise has on animals, specifically a horse that she owns.
 - Ms. Lansdale reiterated the relocation and environmental concerns brought forth by Ms. Etheridge, then stated that the gun range would not be good for the economy, due to a negative impact to the surrounding residents. She then posed the question to everyone attending the meeting: would you want to live next to that? In closing she referenced a Georgia state law (49-1-9) that states residents can file complaints and a suit if they are not allowed to enjoy their own property.
- Mr. Charles White
 - Mr. White stated that he would like to see the gun range relocated, but did not have further comment since all concerns had been presented.
- County Attorney
 - The County Attorney stated that himself and the Commissioners were very sympathetic to the citizens in the area since all the concerns presented are reasonable. He stated that he has researched the gun range to determine if any ordinances or state laws were being violated. He stated that the only County ordinance that could address an issue would be noise, however the ordinance does not address firearms, nor are there any other ordinances that address firearms. He then addressed the law that Ms. Lansdale referenced. Georgia law 41-1-9(c) states that no gun range is subject to civilian or criminal suits pursuant to the noise created by the operation of the range, and that as long as the gun range is abiding by law set forth, they cannot be liable. A question from the public was then posed about addressing this issue with a new ordinance, to which the County Attorney stated that existing ordinances cannot be passed retroactively to prohibit the operation of a gun range.

Old Business

- Alcohol Application
 - The County Administrator stated that this item would be tabled since no State of Georgia application has been received by the Department of Revenue for this establishment.

Business

- Backhoe Equipment – Road Department
 - This item was tabled for further research and discussion.
- CDBG – Recreation Department
 - The County Administrator stated that the County received a grant in the amount of \$750,000 to renovate the multi-purpose building at the Recreation Department. He stated that the amount of work need for the building is much more as bids were received in excess of \$2 million. He stated that 2 bids were received to do the renovations: MMI Construction for \$2.1 million, and Dyer Construction for \$2.5 million. He stated that all funds beyond the grant amount will be taken from the American Rescue Plan funds. He stated that an approval of up to \$2.1 million would be appropriate to fund the project, but that there is value engineering that can be done to lower the overall amount.
 - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to award the work to MMI Construction for an amount up to \$2.1 million. Commissioner Hitchcock made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed unanimously.
- EMS Council Reappointment
 - The County Administrator stated that one of the appointed members for Washington County on this council has a term that will expire. He stated that the Mr. Tony Johnson, who currently serves on this council, has expressed that he would serve another term.
 - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to reappoint Mr. Johnson to the EMS Council. Commissioner Watkins made a motion to do so, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Courthouse Metal Detector
 - The County Administrator explained that the current metal detector at the courthouse has ceased working. He stated that is has been operating for many years and needed to be replaced as recommended by the Sheriff. The Sheriff obtained 2 quotes for a replacement: Protective Technologies for \$27,117 with Astrophysics XIS 5335S inspection, and from Security Detection for \$23,885 for an Autoclear 5333 inspection. The Sheriff recommended the quote from Protective Technologies.
 - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the purchase from Protective Technologies. Commissioner Simmons made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Watkins. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Executive Session – Property
 - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to enter into executive session. Commissioner Hitchcock made a motion to do so, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed unanimously.
 - The County Administrator stated that this session was to discuss property items as requested by the Development Authority.

- The Development Authority requested \$27,180 to assist with items to be repaired at the Shared Services building. Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the request. Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hitchcock. The motion was passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned

Comments from Chairman

Public Comment Session



Horace Daniel, Chairman

Attest:



Dustin Peebles, County Administrator/Clerk