

## Washington County Board of Commissioners

Regular Meeting

March 11, 2021

9:00am

**Commissioners Present:** Horace Daniel, Doug Watkins, Edward Burten, James Hitchcock, Frank Simmons

**Prayer**

**Pledge**

**Call to Order**

### **Approval of Past Minutes**

- A motion was made by Commissioner Hitchcock to approve the minutes from the previous regular meeting, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion to approve those minutes passed with a show of hands.

### **Bills**

- A motion was required to approve the bills for the past month as follows:
  - Administrative & Other \$344,352.88
  - Road Department \$102,156.18
  - Sheriff Dept. & Jail \$31,193.84
  - Courthouse \$41,432.98
  - EMA \$986.29
  - E-911 \$5,871.91
  - Landfill \$54,319.59

A motion was made by Commissioner Watkins to approve the bill for the past month, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

### **Road Department Update**

- Mr. Waller stated that the new pipes on New Road have been installed, with the road being reopened by the end of this week. He stated that work on Henderson Grove Road will begin next week. Regarding the other pipe projects, he stated that Superior is slated to begin within the next two weeks. He stated that with the recent dry weather, motor grader crews have been out in full force trying to catch up on scraping roads. He stated that the ditches are still very wet and more drying out is needed before the motor graders can address pulling ditches.

### **Appointments**

- State of District Attorney Office – Tripp Fitzner
  - District Attorney Fitzner thanked the commissioners for having him at the meeting to give an update. He stated that the largest supporters of his office are the counties, and that he was not here to request more funding. He stated there has been a significant backlog due to Covid. There have been no jury trials since the beginning of Covid, with 392 pending cases with 60% of those with pending charges. Now there are 380 cases

pending with only 37% of those with pending charges. He stated that the office now has a physical presence in Washington County, as they are utilizing the old police department building in Tennille and plans to have an open house within the next couple of months. He stated that they are focusing on gang cases and tracking dangerous gang members. He went on to give details on an early intervention program and partnering with a faith based organization to assist with that program. There are also plans for helping the public with expungement for those that have first-time, low level offenses, and free classes to inform the public of laws and rights they may not be aware of.

- Chairman Daniel thanked the District Attorney for his visit and update to the commissioners.
- Second Amendment Sanctuary – Lyle Pittman
  - Mr. Pittman stated that his reasoning for attending the meeting was to ask the commissioners to consider the second amendment sanctuary language to protect the County's law-abiding and gun-owning citizens from any federal laws that seek to infringe on the public's constitutional right to own firearms. He submitted to the commissioners a draft resolution supporting the protection of those rights.
  - The County Attorney stated that he will review what has been presented to the commissioners but went on to say that this resolution is mainly symbolic in that it would support the Sheriff in not enforcing laws against the second amendment, should the Sheriff decide to spurn those new laws.

#### **Old Business**

- Broadband Ordinance
  - The County Administrator explained that the proposed broadband ordinance presented at the February meeting was read aloud, advertised, and received no negative comments from the public. He stated that the ordinance streamlines the permitting process for broadband companies seeking to establish infrastructure in the County, and is a requirement for the Broadband Ready certification designated by the Department of Community Affairs. He informed the commissioners that the certification would also help with future grant applications for broadband.
  - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the ordinance. A motion was made Commissioner Simmons, seconded by Commissioner Hitchcock. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **New Business**

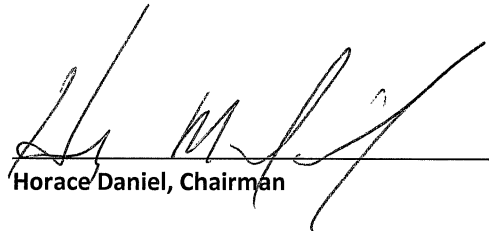
- Timber Harvesting
  - The County Administrator explained that County property located on Kaolin Road past the collection center, and then next to the recently closed landfill, had trees that were recommended to be cut. He stated that the trees on that property have either beetles or disease that are beginning to kill the trees, and that not cutting them now would lead to a loss of revenue and a waste of timber. He stated there are approximately 66 acres that need to be cut. He went on to state that only one quote was received to harvest timber from Woodard Timber and that, after speaking with timber professionals, the prices quoted for the timber are good figures.

- Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to award Woodard Timber the harvesting contract. Commissioner Simmons made a motion to award, seconded by Commissioner Watkins. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Elections Board Appointments
  - The County Administrator explained that there were vacancies on the Board of Elections due to resignations. He stated the Elections Director, Cathy Hagans, had spoken with and recommended two individuals that are willing to serve on the board: Jeanclaire Morris and Laura Simmons. Both ladies were employed by the Board of Education in the past, and both were highly recommended from Mrs. Hagans.
  - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the two candidates to the Board of Elections. Commissioner Simmons made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hitchcock. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Hospital Authority Appointment
  - The County Administrator explained that there was a vacancy on the Hospital Authority due to the term ending of a previous member. He stated that the chairman of the authority, Jim Croome, recommended the appointment of Sandy Lovett. She is currently employed by Thiele in human resources and was highly recommended by others in the community.
  - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to approve the candidate to the Hospital Authority. Commissioner Hitchcock made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Executive Session – Property
  - Chairman Daniel asked for a motion to enter into executive session. Commissioner Hithcock made a motion to do so, seconded by Commissioner Watkins. The motion passed unanimously.
  - The County Administrator explained that the discussion in executive session was in regard to broadband and the possible installation of new broadband infrastructure in the County.

**Chairman Comments**

**Meeting Adjourned**

**Public Comment Session**



Horace Daniel, Chairman

**Attest:**



Dustin Peebles, County Administrator/Clerk