

CHEROKEE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session

April 2, 2013

3:00 p.m.

Cherokee Hall

MINUTES

The Chairman began at 3:10 p.m. with all Commissioners present. The Chairman began by reading some motivational quotes, many of which he has read before but felt were worth repeating.

1. Discussion of Regular Agenda Items.

Chairman Ahrens went over the **Announcements** portion:

The Chairman announced the 4-H Rabies Clinic will be at various schools in the County on Saturday, April 20th. Cost is \$8 per animal.

He also announced that portions Upper Bethany Road would be closed from April 8 to April 12.

Chairman Ahrens went over the **Chairman's** portion:

- A. The Chairman explained the Economic Development Funding Initiative. He said that in late January, the County had asked the cities for a contribution to increase the funding for the Cherokee Office of Economic Development (COED). They have a lot of activity going on and need additional resources. He added there is money available at the private level and several organizations have private funding to help with economic development. Chairman Ahrens added that the City of Canton has taken the most positive visible action and voted to put it in their budget for consideration. The City of Woodstock's response was similar though not voted

upon. Holly Springs has been silent. Ball Ground has already committed. Waleska is considering it and he is scheduled to meet before their city council Monday evening. He said that what was proposed was both Canton and Woodstock contribute \$20,000; Holly Springs contribute \$10,000; then Ball Ground and Waleska contribute \$5,000 each, all with a three year commitment. He then asked the Board to consider matching the \$60,000 for a total of \$120,000. The Chairman mentioned they could possibly get some contribution by the Cherokee Water and Sewer Authority. Commissioner Nelms asked if that would just be an uptick in the current budget. The Chairman stated that half of the additional funds would be to hire another person and the rest for discretionary spending such as communications in the Atlanta Business Chronicle. He added the total would be enough to make a difference.

Commissioner Nelms stated that he believes we are behind the curve and that there's another area that needs research, which is infrastructure gaps. The Chairman stated this will give the Office of Economic Development some tools of flexibility that they need. Commissioner Johnston added that though we are facing another tough fiscal year, this contribution shouldn't make or break the budget and that he feels we can meet the \$60,000 goal. The Chairman expressed a desire for the Board to be unanimous in the decision to the contribution. He added that it is not time sensitive and that if anyone had any suggestions or questions, the vote could wait.

Mr. Cooper stated there is a particular operation that he can cut about \$75,000 from with no impact. The demand for the business center upstairs is very low and if staff needs a big job copied, they can send it out to the private sector or they can send a staff member to make the copies themselves. Commissioner Johnston confirmed that we will keep the machines, but the vendor wouldn't staff it. We would staff it when needed. Mr. Cooper stated he wouldn't want to use the entire amount in order to cover the cost for the rental of the equipment, but could spare the \$60,000 for the contribution.

Prior to the County Manager's section, the Chairman mentioned the vacancy on the Ethics Board, the Highland Rivers Board, as well as two more vacancies coming up on the Resource Recovery Development Authority. Commissioner Nelms reminded the Board of vacancies on the Cemetery Preservation Committee. The Chairman suggested amending the agenda and adding that vacancy under his portion for the regular meeting. Commissioner Nelms mentioned that he and Commissioner Gunnin each had a spot to fill.

Mr. Cooper went over the **Consent Agenda** portion:

- Consider approval of budget amendment to transfer \$4,275.00 from Personnel to Operating Expenditures to purchase the CityView MS Outlook Add-in Module for all CityView Users.

- Amended: Consider approval of budget amendment to transfer funds from Pre-Trial between State Court and Court Administration budgets due to the elimination of the Pre-Trial Department. This transfer totals \$78,552.00 but does not increase revenue or expenses.

Mr. Cooper went over items under the **County Manager's** portion:

- Consider approval of grant application in the amount of \$16,527.00 for the DUI/Drug Treatment Court for fiscal year 2014.
- Consider approval of Purchase Order to Staples for furniture and equipment for the Cherokee County Aquatic Center in the amount of \$48,445.00.
- Consider approval of Swim Lane Use Agreements for USS Age Group Competitive Teams at Cherokee County Aquatic Center to three proposers: Chattahoochee Gold, Stingrays, and Marietta Marlins as recommended by staff and CRPA Advisory Board.

Commissioner Johnston asked if there were any others who wanted to be included. Mr. Bryan Reynolds stated those were the only three proposals. Commissioner Johnston asked what the plan is to handle those who are not one of the three teams and want to utilize lanes for practices. Mr. Reynolds responded that they could during non-peak times, but if it's another USS team they would most likely request the same time of year and the schedule is pretty much full at this point minus the reserve for public use. Commissioner Johnston asked if the high school schedule was the same. Mr. Reynolds said it is, but they were able to work around the high school schedule and their season is shorter than the USS teams who basically swim year round. Commissioner Nelms asked how many USS sanctioned teams were based in the County. Mr. Reynolds stated Chattahoochee Gold was the only sanctioned team in the County.

- Consider approval of Sidewalk Trip Hazard Removal Services Contract with low proposer MRC Group, LLC, to perform sidewalk repairs as needed countywide. A second proposal was received by GA Safe Sidewalks.
- Consider approval of Professional Services Agreement with Moreland Altobelli Associates, Inc., to perform land surveying, minor design and environmental services for County roadway construction projects.
- Notification of Board of Commissioners of intent to submit a grant application to Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) for funds to establish a Mental Health Court in Cherokee County.

Mr. Cooper stated that Judge Wood, Chief Probate Judge, is here to discuss the purpose and need for the grant and to answer any questions. Judge Wood began by stating that many of cases are tied to drugs and alcohol and many include mental health issues. The challenge has been on how the cases are handled.

Judge Wood said that this is a process that has been going on for about a year and now there is an opportunity to apply for a grant. This is a collaboration between the courts as well as the Sheriff's Office to establish a Mental Health Court with the main goal being to provide those who are facing criminal charges who have a significant mental illness with access to treatment. He added that this was one way to reach State funds to establish a court that will allow us to connect those people with services they're not going to otherwise have access to—counseling, medication and treatment, housing, employment opportunities—things they need but aren't currently receiving. The goal of the court is to use this as a means to reduce days these individuals spend in jail as opposed to days they are hopefully being productive citizens. He said that the court will not start without sufficient funding. He will continue with planning until the funding can be obtained and they can move forward. Commissioner Johnston noted the model is similar to the DUI/Drug Court in that if the individual commits a crime and is recognized by the court to have mental issues then the court tries to intervene and get them on a different path than through the criminal process. Judge Wood confirmed and added that ideally this is a logical compliment to the Drug and DUI Court. It allows a different type of treatment rather than sending them to AA and such. Commissioner Johnston asked what the money would be actually used for. Judge Wood responded there are several components in the Mental Health Court. First, you need a court coordinator who operates between the judge and the various service providers. There is also a mental health treatment provider, whether it is a group like Highland Rivers or another party. You also need a case manager who works with those people to connect them with a service such as housing or if they're disabled, help get those benefits started. He added the reason he is helping to work on this is that he has seen common consumers as these are people who have been committed for treatment and have also shown up in state court. Commissioner Nelms asked the amount requested in the grant. Judge Wood stated it is \$169,000 although it is subject to change by the time the application is submitted. The Chairman asked if there were other jurisdictions that have this. Judge Wood responded that seven out of the top ten counties in the state have these types of courts. We are surrounded by counties to the North, East and South that have them. Bartow County doesn't have a Mental Health Court. Commissioner Johnston expressed concern that the County would need to match the grant with funds we don't have and what happens in a year or two if the grant isn't renewed. Judge Wood responded that there were two grants they looked at, one of which did require a match, but they did not apply for that grant. These funds are straight up grant funds that do not require matching. They are reimbursement grants. Once the court is operational, we would evaluate whether we are serving needs and use that data to determine what savings are realized. That's how to justify the existence of the court. If those goals are not being met and no one is in the program, the program doesn't continue. Commissioner Johnston asked if Probate would have the power to declare an individual incompetent and force them into the program. Judge Wood stated that they couldn't go quite that far. The benefit is that they can help the individual get services they may not have otherwise received and to keep from affecting their criminal record. The County in general doesn't receive a lot of mental health

funding. The grant is one way to obtain funding for treatment for people in need of it. The Chairman asked the time frame for the grant. Judge Wood stated that it was for a year and they would re-apply the next year. The Chairman asked if there had been any communication with Northside Hospital-Cherokee. Judge Wood said there had not been so far but that he is hopeful that there will be. The Chairman suggested communication to Northside as they preparing to build their new hospital.

Ms. Angie Davis went over the **County Attorney's** portion:

Ms. Davis stated the County received an annexation notice from the City of Ball Ground for approximately 23 acres located at Highway 372. Three of the parcels are already zoned AG and designated for suburban growth, one of the parcels is zoned GC and 5.78 acres is zoned AG. An ownership issue is something that has to be worked through. David and Julia Boone own two of the parcels and two parcels are owned by Granger Holdings, LLC. The applicant has to own 100% of the property they are requesting to be annexed. Granger Holdings, LLC is not reflected anywhere on the application and needs to be reviewed to determine if they need to amend their application. With respect to the land dispute resolution process, under the statute there is an opportunity to object under certain criteria. The deadline to respond is April 19th. She added if the Board had any questions or comments, it would assist her office in getting the information they need. The Chairman stated there is really no information on the application to go by for consideration. Ms. Davis agreed and stated that there is no site plan listed and no elaboration on the type of development. The Chairman mentioned that he forwarded the request to Ball Ground City Manager Eric Wilmarth and found out they are going to grow grapes. The Chairman asked if they don't rezone and just annex, is there a time they have to wait before they can apply for rezoning after the annexation. Ms. Davis said she believes it is a year but will confirm that. Mr. Watkins interjected that it is a bit confusing as to what they are seeking because everything they want to do is possible within the current zoning, everything meets with both County and State codes. He added that the real question is the reason behind the annexation request. Ms. Davis stated more information will be presented at the April 16 meeting.

Chairman Ahrens asked Mr. Cooper if there were any legislative updates from the latest session regarding any financial implications. Mr. Cooper stated that he had been staying on top of the juvenile justice reform bill legislation and has been in communication with ACCG as well. He said that we can choose to keep the juvenile court budget the same for next year; however, they tend to go over budget. Additional cost is anticipated to be around \$50,000. Commissioner Johnston confirmed this is to provide an advocate for the kids in the system. Mr. Cooper mentioned he would provide a detailed overview from Judge Sumner. It said it was feared the bill would require that every child regardless of age would be assigned an attorney. They were successful in allowing a court advocate to represent them in certain cases and that would save a good bit of money. The Chairman mentioned a discussion from a meeting he attended at the Gwinnett Center for the Metro Chairmen. He said they talked about "home rule" and

some strange things in the last legislative session. He added that there were some mileage rate cap proposals, and that the Fractional SPLOST didn't get anywhere. The Chairman added that part of the conversation was if the legislators understand what the implications are and that hearing these things raise a level of concern.

The Chairman asked if there was anything else, hearing none, a motion was moved by Vice-Chairman Nelms to adjourn the Work Session at 4:09 p.m. Commissioner Gunnin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session to Follow