



Cherokee County Board of Commissioners WORK SESSION MINUTES

June 3, 2014

3:00 p.m. | Cherokee Hall

The Chairman began at 3:05 p.m. with Commissioners Poole, Nelms, and Gunnin present. Commissioner Johnston was running late. The Chairman read an excerpt from "Jack Welch: Straight from the Gut" regarding setting stretch goals.

Note: Commissioner Johnston arrived at 3:19 p.m.

1. Review Millage Rate Schedule.

Ms. Funk began by stating she put together a timeline for the millage rate schedule. She added that the timeline may be different based on the millage rate they choose. If we are going to have a millage rate that is equal to the rollback rate, then the requirements are much less than if you have a millage rate that is higher than the full rollback rate. Ms. Funk stated she believes we are close to reaching a full rollback rate but it also depends on how much risk you want to have into the budget. If we do not achieve the full rollback rate, the timeline we would have to follow would be to have three public hearings. Ms. Funk referred to the schedule and asked the Commissioners to look at the dates to see if they are okay for the timeline. She stated that June 17th will be the first presentation of the millage rate. At that time, they would choose which millage rate they want to go with and advertise. If they choose to advertise a millage rate that is higher than the full rollback, they would need to advertise that on June 22nd then the first public hearing would be July 1st at the normal scheduled meeting. The second public hearing would need to be on July 15th at a regularly schedule Commissioners' meeting. They can choose to have the third one as two in one day in order to get as many to attend the meetings as possible or it can be on the day they adopt the rates. She tentatively scheduled the adoption date for July 24th which would be the day after the school system sets their millage rates.

Ms. Funk asked for the Commissioners' opinion on the dates. The Chairman responded that they have traditionally held public hearings anyway as a matter of public interest. He stated that if we don't meet the full rollback, then meeting on July 1st and 15th and then the adoption date as long as it's after the school board meets. If they are comfortable with a full rollback then they could meet either date in July. The Chairman confirmed that they will have a better idea of the risk on

June 17th. Ms. Funk stated that she is still reviewing the final budget information that they have right now and we appear pretty close. She will be meeting with Mr. Cooper later in the week and afterward will have the information in time for the Board to review and provide input before making the presentation on June 17th. The Chairman asked how the digest is looking. Ms. Funk said they don't have any other updates since the first one, but it is up 9.92%. The real growth is about 2.5%.

The Chairman asked the Commissioners if they had any comments or concerns. Commissioner Nelms commented that if they have a full rollback, he would be fine with a single public hearing prior to adopting the rates. The Chairman stated he would look to a full rollback as a goal. He added it sends a positive message. Ms. Funk stated that when they talk about a full rollback and the requirements that apply to the public hearings, they are always referring to the General Fund. If the full rollback does not occur for the other funds, you don't have to do the three public hearings. Ms. Funk referenced the Park Bonds and mentioned they are looking to do a bond issuance by August 1st and if they are going to do that, they will need to get started on it soon. In order to get started, they will need to discuss whether or not to increase that rate for the Park Bonds Fund to cover that debt service. Commissioner Johnston confirmed that previously Ms. Funk thought they would be okay with the Park Bond without an increase in the millage rate even if they go ahead with this, but he is now hearing differently. Ms. Funk replied yes. She added she is taking the CitiBank model to estimate what that millage rate really would be. It was missing commissions on tax collections which is a decrease on collections and also the decrease in motor vehicle tax. Also, if they were to issue bonds this year on August 1st, we would still have debt service to pay this calendar year which would not have been incorporated into last year's millage rate. Because of that, our current rate is 0.776 and it's looking more like .82 to cover that. Ms. Funk explained how the dollar value would be affected by the change and that it would change by about \$400,000. Commissioner Nelms asked if the gap of \$400,000 would offset the cost of the debt service for 2014. Ms. Funk replied that the gap is off-setting the debt service, commissions on tax collections, and the decrease in motor vehicle tax. Commissioner Johnston stated that it would be about \$3.00 on a \$150,000 home for the .05 mil increase. Ms. Funk stated that under the current rate, the Parks Bond would be about \$56 for an average house and the calculated rate would be about \$60. Commissioner Johnston admitted reluctance to increase anything but feels the two biggest park projects need to be completed and he would support the increase. Commissioner Nelms also indicated he would support it. The Chairman asked Ms. Funk if two weeks is too long to wait or if they should have Mr. Bryce Holcomb or someone come out and give them the go ahead to move forward. Commissioner Nelms asked if we have enough cash on hand to fund that additional bond draw or do we need to allocate more funds. Ms.

Funk responded that the cash we have left is completely allocated to the projects we already have and we are at a very low cash point. We will be issuing about \$22.8 Million on August 1st. That would be enough to cover the last two parks and miscellaneous projects. Commissioner Nelms asked when those monies will be in hand. Ms. Funk replied it would be shortly after, about August 10th. She commented that she spoke with Mr. Holcomb earlier in the day regarding the Park Bond and the concerns about the millage rate. She said he stated that if we have approval in place to move forward by next Work Session, that we would be in the same time frame of the August 1st delivery date. Ms. Funk said she would invite him to come and speak if they would like. She clarified that we are going to reach for the full rollback and to have one public hearing versus three and will still target July 24th as the final date for adoption. She added she will have something approved by Mr. Cooper available no later than the following week for the Board to review.

The Chairman mentioned the Sheriff's Quarterly Awards will be presented in the Regular Meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

The Cherokee County Board of Commissioners will hear a request by Jeffrey S. and Sharon M. Lentz to create a legacy lot at their property located at 202 Acacia Lane, Woodstock (Tax Map 21N10A, Parcel A004 C) on June 3, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Taylor-Lee gave a brief overview of the case. It sits on the lake and they have approximately .75 acres they want to subdivide. They built a guest house first then built a primary home. They want to split those off so they have two separate dwelling units. They received no objection by the Corps of Engineers. Ms. Taylor-Lee stated that when it was presented to her they didn't intend to be there forever and that the larger parcel would be for their son and the smaller for their daughter. Subsequent to her preparing it for the Board's approval, she received information from an adjacent landowner. If it is approved as a legacy lot, Ms. Taylor-Lee says she does not believe it will be immediately occupied by their daughter. It may be a long-term goal to do that.

Commissioner Poole referred to a letter that says a family member may live next door and asked Ms. Taylor-Lee to confirm that she doesn't think it's immediate. She replied she believes that is the case. She said she learned they were renting it out subsequently. Ms. Taylor-Lee expressed concern about using the legacy lot criteria to establish a rental. Commissioner Poole mentioned the letter stating that

upon approval a survey will be conducted to ensure compliance with zoning rules. Ms. Taylor-Lee responded that the only way they can subdivide that into two parcels is with the Board's approval because one of the lots would be non-conforming and too small for the zoning category. Mr. Jeff Watkins explained the legacy lot as a lot that someone wants to split as a familial gift. One lot split into two where zoning would not otherwise support it with one lot being standard and the other being less than standard because it would be considered non-conforming. He stated that the subdivision will have to be particular because of where the septic tanks and the infrastructure of the houses reside on that lot. The Chairman asked about the future if this goes forward in the event a family member wants to move away and how the legacy condition applies in the future. Mr. Watkins responded that they will have to abide by the criteria but after that time frame, it would be considered two different parcels.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

COMMISSION DISTRICT 3

BRIAN POOLE

A. Discussion on County's sign ordinance.

Commissioner Poole stated he wanted to open up the topic of discussion to see what can be done to have some type of enforcement to get the political signs up. He commented he knew the candidates have 30 days after elections to get the signs up but asked if there was a way to get something in place for 30 days prior to elections since the signs are put in medians and right-of-ways and the County receives so many complaints from constituents. Commissioner Johnston asked if he had any suggestions. Commissioner Poole replied he wanted to open it up to the Board for suggestions. Commissioner Johnston confirmed that it was to reduce the amount of signs in a right-of-way. Commissioner Poole stated that at times the signs become a traffic hazard when placed in line of sight for oncoming traffic. The Chairman asked if it also might include they couldn't put up the signs until 30 days before. He suggested they think about it and possibly come to the next meeting with a game plan.

Commissioner Johnston commented that this is one of the hard realities of their job to make an ordinance that may not amount to much and is difficult to enforce. He said it would take more resources to take them up with every phone as well as more resources to find out where the right-of-way is. Commissioner Johnston mentioned they had a crew at one time under a previous Marshal that were volunteers who underwent training and were certified by the County Marshal and

they were authorized to remove illegally placed signs. He suggested reactivating a volunteer team like that would be an option. Commissioner Nelms stated that the more restricted they become the more money directly or indirectly it costs. He added the Marshal's Office doesn't have enough resources to do it. It was agreed to not ask the Marshal's Office to undertake that on its own. Commissioner Johnston commented that the idea for the volunteers may be the best way to go.

B. DROP Plan (Deferred Retirement Option Program).

Commissioner Poole stated he received a call from a fireman who has been employed with the County for 30 years and though he's not yet ready to retire, he asked about retirement after the 30-year mark. Commissioner Poole added that he reached out to Ms. Tracy Chambers and asked her to give an update on the DROP Plan and how it can help employees who have been here for 30 years and get some type of benefit back to them.

Ms. Chambers began by stating that the County has several employees who have hit the 30-year mark and don't want to retire. She said the way our plan is set up is that if they continue to work, they will continue to pay into the retirement plan. She used Commissioner Gunnin as an example for when he worked with the Fire Department. He worked two years past the 30-year mark and had to pay into retirement but didn't receive the benefit any more than he would have if he left two years earlier. She said the only option would be to look into something like a DROP Plan or to extend the service credit for the DB (Defined Benefit) plan but that would be more costly. The minimum for the DROP Plan would be 30 years before the employee could even go into it. Ms. Chambers commented that it is very popular in public service employees. She said they can set it up to where it would be revenue neutral. If they go this route, it would be set up similar to the 457. The employees' service credit would freeze, their salary at the 30-year mark would freeze, and then the contributions would go into a DROP Plan. Ms. Chambers gave several options the County can decide on how to contribute or match. She shared some preliminary work for the plan. 1) There would be no increase into the unfunded liability for the DB plan. She indicated the DROP Plan would work best for a limited number of people who hit the 30-year mark who are not going to want to retire. Commissioner Gunnin stated that anyone he has ever spoken to that participated in the program said it was cost neutral to their municipality. It gives the employee a chance to say they will retire so many years past the 30-year mark. He said they can manage it just like a 457. He said people who hit the 30-year mark find they are having to pay to work. He said the cost neutral part of it helps the employee. Commissioner Gunnin stated he believes this is a plan they need to explore and move on with. He said the only way the employee could benefit is if the pay increased the last few years that they worked over.

Commissioner Johnston agrees that it is wrong for an employee to pay in over 30 years and receive no benefit. His concern is the revenue neutral part of it and commented that they need to be cautious. It means that over the long-run there is less money, relative to benefits to be paid, going into the plan. He feels that will drive up costs for the participants and the County. Ms. Chambers commented that on the flipside, people are leaving the plan and are drawing money out of the plan at a younger age and the plan is paying it longer. She offered to contact Segal to have them look it over and develop a plan and give them several options if the Board should decide to move forward in checking into that. Commissioner Johnston stated that they need to at least stop making people pay into the plan and receiving no additional benefit and then decide what the County needs to do with their contribution to the plan. Commissioner Gunnin suggested it go into a succession plan until they know who will fill the retiring employee's position. The Chairman asked if they can change the DB plan or if they would need to go through GEBCorp. Ms. Chambers replied that they can go to GEBCorp and request a plan amendment and request the years of service change from 30 to 35 but there would be a cost to that. She said they would have to go to GEBCorp either way to amend the plan. Commissioner Gunnin reiterated that he would like to at least explore the option to see what they can come up with. Commissioner Poole asked how many employees are at 30 plus years. Ms. Chambers responded that there are about five to ten. Commissioner Poole stated they should be able to come up with something. He suggested that Ms. Chambers research some more and come up with some solutions. The Chairman agreed and added they could come back with alternatives. Commissioner Johnston asked if that was something they could ask GEBCorp to help with. Ms. Chambers replied that they could but she recommends asking a neutral company like Segal to do it. The Chairman asked Ms. Chambers to plan to have an update by the next Work Session.

COMMISSION DISTRICT 4

JASON NELMS

- A. Consider approval of multi-way stop at intersection of Woodstock Road and Victory Drive per recommendations made in traffic engineering study by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Commissioner Nelms stated this is something that has tugged on his heart from the beginning. He recalled the accident that took the life of Tiffany Nicole Robbins and her unborn baby. He added he has spoken to the victim's family several times throughout the process. Commissioner Nelms said they asked Kimley-Horn to do a traffic study analysis of the intersection. He commended the company of the thoroughness of the study. The study resulted in a recommendation of installing a multi-way stop which will include stop bars at each stop sign and signs indicating a

stop ahead at the intersection and later adding a roundabout. Advertising requesting proposals for the project will take place within the next 90 days. Funding will be incorporated into the upcoming fiscal year for the SPLOST roadway program. He asks for the Board to approve the project and also to name the intersection after Ms. Robbins. Commissioner Nelms thanked Mr. Brett Buchanan and Mr. Geoff Morton for their work on the project.

Prior to presenting his portion, Mr. Cooper commented that Chief Robinson has some exciting news to share with the Board. He prefaced by stating while under Chief Gunnin, they had been working to improve Fire and Emergency Services. He mentioned that one of the goals they established was to achieve an ISO (Insurance Service Office) rating of 4. They had multiple split ratings of 5/9 throughout the County and wanted to achieve a County-wide 5/9 rating. That was the first step. Mr. Cooper stated they were confident they would achieve the ISO 4 through the recent evaluation but were also hopeful to achieve a 3. Not only did they achieve a 3 but were less than a point of achieving an ISO of 2. Mr. Cooper stated that it is very difficult for a rural County to achieve a 3 but a 2 would be unheard of. Commissioner Johnston asked how many points are between a 2 and 3 rating. Mr. Cooper replied that it is a 10-point spread. He commended Chief Prather and Chief Robinson on a great job for their achievement. He said he spoke with Buddy Hodges at the insurance office who said the savings is between about 3-5% for homeowners and businesses.

Chief Robinson gave a brief history of the ISO for fire departments. He reiterated that Mr. Cooper had set the goal of a County-wide 5/9 rating, which they achieved in July 2012. After that, Mr. Cooper set a new goal of 4/8B. Chief Robinson explained that the top number refers to properties within five road miles of a fire station and within 1,000 feet of a credible water supply and the second number refers to those properties within five road miles of a fire station which were beyond 1,000 feet of a credible water supply. Chief Robinson stated the ISO recently changed their rating scheme explained the new classification process. He commented that there are certain pockets that make it difficult to access certain properties but they are working with engineering to create access roads.

Chief Robinson moved on to the 2014 results and reiterated the new rating of 3/3Y by the ISO. They were able to save money for the tax payers on both the top and bottom categories. The Chairman asked if there was one category that could have made up that one point difference. He said he had already been looking into that. He added that Chief Prather gave him the go-ahead to invite the ISO back in December 2015. Chief Robinson showed a comparison from the July 2012 report to the May 2014 report and showed areas of significant improvement. He stated the ISO came up with a divergence factor in relation to adequate water supply.

The divergence factor mathematically reduces your preliminary scores if the fire department and water supply scores are incompatible with each other. Chief Robinson showed a ratings comparison between county-wide and Georgia.

Chief Robinson shared how they were able to achieve the new rating: Strategically investing in staffing, training, equipment, and facilities; outstanding leadership starting with Chief Gunnin and passed on to Chief Prather; the Board believing in them and allowing them the resources they need; and dedication of the men and women serving the County. He then briefly went over awards and recognitions they received nationally, statewide, and regionally over the last several years. Chief Robinson touched on the community organizations they raised funds for and support. He then opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Johnston confirmed that a typical homeowner could save about \$150 a year as a result of the change in rating. Chief Robinson responded that on a \$150,000 house, the base premium savings difference between a 5 and a 3 was \$149; on a \$300,000 home, the base premium savings is \$264. He added that for commercial properties, the savings is significantly more because their premiums are significantly more. Commissioner Gunnin stated that he knew what it took to get it done and that it's outstanding. He added that it helps the taxpayers offset their taxes by saving on their insurance but also because they have a better fire department. He congratulated them for their work. The Chairman stated that it is a great example of teamwork, focus, prioritization, raising the bar, raising standards of expectation and it came together with the right energy and passion. He added that at the end of the day, they are saving more lives and property because of everything they do every day. Commissioner Gunnin stated they have to commend the Board for standing up for the Fire Department because the Board of Commissioners set the level of service and if they are given the tools, they will perform. Commissioner Nelms commended Chief Robinson on a job well done. He would love to see what's next down the road after they've accomplished. Chief Robinson stated that Chief Prather has directed that they develop a strategic plan. They have been really close to completion of that and getting it to Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper went over six items under the **Consent Agenda** portion:

- 1.1 Approval of grant contract in the amount of \$40,736.00 for the DUI/Drug Treatment Court for State FY2015 (July 2014 – June 2015) and approval of Budget Amendment for County FY2014.
- 1.2 Approve grant award for State Accountability Court in the amount of \$112,693.00.

- 1.3 Approve reallocation of funds to purchase drug testing supplies in the amount of \$38,000.00.
- 1.4 Consider approval of proposal from Southeastern Engineering, Inc., to perform roadway design for Brick Mill Road under their annual engineering consulting services contract in the amount of \$39,500.00.
- 1.5 Consider acceptance of the Officer Roy Marcum Ballistic Vest Grant Program award and budget amendment in the amount of \$2,400.00 to be used to purchase ballistic vests for Animal Control Officers.
- 1.6 Consider acceptance of supplemental Sub-grant award in the amount of \$3,800.00 from the State of Georgia Accountability Court and approve budget amendment increasing DUI/Drug Court Fund revenues and expenditures.

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

- 2.1 Award bid in the amount of \$149,800.00 to the lowest priced proposer, Reynolds-Warren Equipment Company for the purchase of a 2014 Rosco Maximizer 2B (Asphalt Distributor) for Roads and Bridges; funding is from budgeted SPLOST V monies.
- 2.2 Award bid in the amount of \$55,829.00 to the lowest priced proposer, Wade Ford, for the purchase of a 2015 Ford F-750XL Fuel/Service Truck for Roads and Bridges; funding is from budgeted SPLOST V monies.
- 2.3 Consider proposal to establish a new area for burials in Pine Knot Cemetery to preserve existing specimen trees.
- 2.4 Award County's standard Professional Services Agreement (PSA) to Kenneth Nix in the amount of \$46,147.00 for the design and construction of a 2.3 mile natural terrain Bike/Run Trail around the Roger Garrison Law Enforcement Training Center.
- 2.5 Approval of amended Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Cherokee County and DHS-USCIS enhancing the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program which allows the county to verify citizenship

and immigration status information to determine eligibility for specified public benefits.

- 2.6 Consider IGA with the City of Ball Ground for the purchase and installation of security cameras in City Parks at a cost of \$19,149.61 with Parks Bond funding.
- 2.7 Consider IGA with the City of Ball Ground to allow the Tax Commissioners Office to prepare the City's tax digest, assess and collect municipal ad valorem tax payments for a fee to be paid by the City in the amount of \$2 per each parcel of real estate and each personal property account. The funds will be submitted to the County for general purposes uses.
- 2.8 Approval to award the construction contract to the lowest responsible bidder, with the most responsive bid proposal for construction of the Woodstock Trails Bridge over Noonday Creek to connect the Woodstock Dog Park to Woodstock Trails to Lewallen Construction in the amount of \$449,000.00; for acceptance of the base bid proposal amount \$449,000.00, inclusive of unit prices for unsuitable soils and deep foundation drilled piers. No allowances or other unit prices were requested. A contingency account (to be controlled by Cherokee County Capital projects) in the amount of \$51,000.00 is also requested. Total amount requested for approval: \$500,000.00.
- 2.9 Consider sale of trolley to the Woodstock Downtown Development Authority in the amount of \$15,000.00.
- 2.10 Consider request to accept Professional Services Agreement with Goshen Community Care/Goshen Valley Foundation for CHINS Coordination and Management, and Truancy Prevention for Juvenile Court.
- 2.11 Consideration of employee separation agreement.

Adjourn

Hearing no further items, Commissioner Johnston made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 4:48 p.m. to discuss personnel matters, property acquisition or disposal, and/or pending or threatened litigation; Commissioner Gunnin seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.