

**Minutes of the
Board of Commissioners
of Worth County, Georgia
Workshop**

Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

The Board of County Commissioners of Worth County convened in a Workshop on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the County Commission Board Room at 201 N. Main Street, Sylvester, Georgia.

- I. Call to Order:** Chairman Dent called the workshop to order at 7:00 p.m.
Commissioners Present: Chairman Fred Dent, Commissioner Joe Gaines, Commissioner Ken Hall, Commissioner E. Dice Roberts, and Commissioner Kemp Willis
Absent: N/A
Also Present: County Attorney Ralph Powell, County Administrator Carl Rowland, and County Clerk Angela Harrah

II. Presentations

A. John NeSmith, CPA with Hudson & NeSmith CPAs - Audit report

Mr. NeSmith presented his report on the County's fiscal year 2022-2023 audit. He reported no material problems or issues with the books or records. Mr. NeSmith said that they were able to remove a finding from the previous year because there was no overspending on the final budget like there had been in the past. Also, because the County spent over \$750,000 in federal grant expenditures such as ARPA or Covid funds, an additional "single audit" was required. The County should consider this an additional layer of security because with a single audit, they also look to see if the funds were used appropriately, and there were no compliance deficiencies during this single audit.

Mr. NeSmith reported that the Board would probably always see the finding related to the separation of duties until the County has additional staffing.

Mr. NeSmith compared the previous year's spending to this FY 2022-2023 spending and reported that the County's overall increase over all funds was \$1,300,000. Revenues increased \$1,200,000.

At the end of June 2023, the County's number of months expendable balance ratio, which estimates how long the County could continue to operate if all funds were depleted, was 7.8 months. Mr. NeSmith reminded Board members that it takes approximately \$1,000,000 to operate the County for one month.

Mr. NeSmith reported that a strategy implemented last year by the finance team resulted in interest income of \$375,000 across all the funds.

Mr. NeSmith pointed out that the ambulance service took an average of eight months to collect billed invoices, which was much longer than the 56 days it took to collect for solid waste. Even though most solid waste invoices were included and collected with

the property taxes, the County may want to address the eight months average for the ambulance service. In addition, Mr. NeSmith said he and Worth County Finance Director, Roland McCarthy, concluded that the County may need to reserve an amount for “bad debt” for the ambulance service to include in next year’s audit; however, until the County had two or three years of payment history established, the figure might seem high.

At the conclusion of Mr. NeSmith’s report, he pointed out that the County was a service-oriented business and typically in a service-oriented business, payroll expenses make up about 50% of expenditures. For Worth County, payroll expenses make up 53%, which is a pretty healthy percentage. He added that this was the same figure as last year.

Mr. NeSmith moved on to the independent audit report on the Worth County Tax Commissioner for the period of July 1, 2023 until March 15, 2024. He reported that no exceptions were found in the procedures they performed. He explained that their audit was designed to identify any discrepancies between the bank’s records and the internal cash reconciliation reports and also identify any discrepancies between bank deposits summarized on the Tax Commissioner’s Excel spreadsheets and the actual deposit amounts. Mr. NeSmith said they also compared check payees on the cancelled checks to the Tax Commissioner’s internal reports, the DRIVES system (for vehicles) and Georgia Tax Collection System (for property taxes). Mr. NeSmith reported that no exceptions were found in the audit on the Tax Commissioner.

B. Ron Rowe, ACCG Regional Client Manager

- i. Defined Contribution Plan / Deferred Compensation Plan**
- ii. Defined Benefit Plan**

Administrator reminded board members they had discussed exploring other retirement plans for County employees, so he asked Ron Rowe with ACCG to give a presentation to Board members on different retirement options.

Mr. Rowe reported that while most private companies were utilizing the 457 contribution / investment plans for employees’ retirement, most local governments still used defined benefit plans or what used to be called “pension plans”, or plans that provide a set monthly payment to the employee at retirement. Mr. Rowe explained that most private companies no longer had pension plans because they were able to pay their employees higher salaries than local government, so the employees had more money to invest.

According to Mr. Rowe, the typical governmental organization is staffed with hometown people who want to stay local so they will work for lower wages than wages offered by private companies in larger cities. He said a good retirement plan can help retain employees.

Mr. Rowe said that every county that borders Worth County has a defined benefit plan

(or pension plan). He said that some also offer the employees the option to contribute to a 457 investment plan.

Mr. Rowe said that in addition to managing the retirement plans, he offered educational programs to employees such as how to get out of debt, financial planning, how to invest, and others.

Mr. Rowe pointed out that for the average employee, social security would only replace about 40% of the employee's income at retirement, which most people would not be able to live on. If the County could provide 30% through its retirement plan, the replacement income increased to 70%. Add to that any additional investment accounts the employee contributed to and the percentage of replacement income at retirement could increase even more.

Mr. Rowe said that if the County decided to offer one of the ACCG retirement benefits, they would need notice of about 60 days.

Administrator said that Worth County already had a 457 investment plan. He also said that the standard period for being vested in the retirement plan was 7 ½ years with previous time being counted towards vesting. Administrator also said that the standard employee contribution was 3% of their salary. Mr. Rowe pointed out that "vesting" years were separate from "credited service" years.

Administrator said that if the Board wanted to go forward with offering this type of retirement, he would include in the budget process.

Commissioner Hall said that he felt that the County needed to look at offering a defined benefit plan.

Chairman Dent agreed and added that it was time to implement. Other Board members concurred.

III. Discussion Items

A. Public Safety Telecommunicators Week April 14th – 20th

Jennifer Webb, 911 Director, addressed the Board and said that designating the week of April 14th – 20th was a way of showing appreciation to the dispatchers in the County.

~~B. Contribution to Georgia Department of Transportation for the Melton Road at Town Creek Bridge project~~

This item was removed from the agenda.

C. Civil engineering proposal from Roberts Civil Engineering for three intersections

Administrator said that this proposal was for a study on three different intersections: Bridgeboro Anderson City Road at Evergreen Road, SR 256 at Sumner Road, and at Poulan Shingler Road at Whiddon Mill Road. The cost for each intersection was \$3,900.

Chairman Dent said the County needed to have these engineering studies done because it may give them options which they had not yet considered. In addition, if the County made a change without having the study done, and something negative happened that was unforeseen by them, the County could be held liable.

D. Resolution 2024-03, a resolution to dedicate a new road

Commissioner Willis said that the Board wanted to recognize Chairman Dent for everything he did to bring the new sports complex to a reality by naming the road into the sports complex “Fred Dent Drive.”

All commissioners agreed to naming the road in honor of Chairman Dent.

E. Proposals for 911 CAD system

Administrator said the County was waiting to hear back regarding a grant application to USDA for funds to be used towards a 911 CAD system; however, it appeared that the grant will not be approved. In addition, 911 had an equipment failure making this purchase more urgent.

Jennifer Webb, 911 Director, addressed the Board and said that they received several proposals for a new CAD system and she recommended accepting the proposal from Southern Software, Inc. She added that she had discussed the mapping component with Chris Hudgins, Worth County Battalion Chief and Addressing Coordinator and they believed that the mapping software was better than that of the current system.

Administrator said that they received positive responses when they checked the references for Southern Software.

Commissioner Hall questioned Mrs. Webb concerning the different pricing components. The total came to \$187,278 for the new 911 CAD system from Southern Software.

F. Purchase of two (2) ambulances

EMS Director and Fire Chief Ray Salter said he met with a representative for an ambulance vendor recently who gave him a price of \$200,000 each for two ambulances. Afterwards, the representative increased the price to \$225,000.

After doing additional research, Chief Salter found a larger ambulance that could be ready in one month at a cost of \$249,500 located in Tennessee. Chief Salter also said he found an ambulance in Glenn County but the cost was \$387,000 and it would not be ready for two years. Another ambulance he found was \$400,000 but was still two years away from being ready.

A discussion ensued regarding selling the 2015 ambulance or keeping it as a spare.

Commissioner Roberts also reminded the Board that it was seven more months until property tax revenues would start being collected.

G. Building Improvements at Public Works

Jason Newton, Division Leader over Maintenance at Public Works, addressed the Board at Administrator's request to discuss needed repairs and upgrades at the Public Works shop and facilities. Mr. Newton also reported on the current conditions of the existing facilities.

After Mr. Newton's report, Commissioner Roberts asked Mr. Newton to report on the tools they use. Mr. Newton said they used their personal tools at Public Works. He gave the Board the value of his tools. He also said they had just hired a new employee, but he did not know if this new employee was going to be able to invest the money he had in tools.

Commissioner Hall said that he was surprised, and somewhat embarrassed, that there were so many needs at Public Works. He said he would like to visit Public Works to see firsthand the items Mr. Newton discussed. Chairman Dent suggested that each commissioner set aside some time to visit the facilities at Public Works.

Commissioner Roberts said he thought there had been funds dedicated in a previous SPLOST for the construction of a new shop. Administrator said he thought those funds had been earmarked for repairs, not new construction.

Commissioner Hall asked if Public Works could begin demolition of the old jail structure on the premises. Commissioner Gaines cautioned against beginning demolition because he thought that tests revealed the presence of asbestos in the building. Public Works Director, John Merritt, addressed the Board and reported that the report read that asbestos was in the caulking of the windows.

H. Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) funds

Administrator reported that a special legislative allocation of funds called LRA (Local Road Assistance Administration Grants) became available through LMIG.

Administrator said the County's allocation would be \$1,288,000 and he would need to submit the grant application in May. Administrator said that the County had a lot of roads in poor condition and this grant required no matching funds from the County.

Mr. Merritt was asked to comment on the roads and he agreed with Administrator on the poor condition of the roads. He added that he received the most complaints on the narrow roads because people drove off the sides of the roads and damaged not only their vehicles, but the road's shoulder as well. He said that other contributors to the deterioration of county roads were wet weather and the increased weight loads allowed. He added that a lot of roads were not built for the new weight loads.

Administrator commented on Sumner Road as a possible road for the LRA funds. He said it had more traffic than some other roads and it was used by heavier trucks and semi-trucks. Commissioner Roberts said there were roads in his district that should be considered as well.

I. Report on financing alternatives for the Worth County Jail

Administrator reported that the County was still searching and talking to people to determine viable financing options for the Worth County Jail since their meetings with USDA led him to believe the loan would not be approved. Administrator added that USDA had not formally denied the loan yet.

Chairman Dent reported that during the meetings with USDA, they indicated that because Worth County was in sound financial shape and not broke, Worth County would not qualify for a loan. Chairman Dent said he questioned this reasoning because it was the opposite of what private sector lending institutions required.

IV. Announcements

A. There will be a regular meeting immediately following this workshop.

V. Adjournment

The Workshop adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF WORTH COUNTY, GEORGIA

FRED DENT, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: _____
ANGELA HARRAH, COUNTY CLERK