

MINUTES
SEVIER COUNTY QUORUM COURT MEETING
2:00 P.M., MONDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2022

The Sevier County Quorum Court met at 2:00 P.M., Monday, February 14, 2022, in the Sevier County Courthouse Courtroom with County Judge Greg Ray presiding. The meeting was opened with prayer by Judge Ray followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The roll was called with the following Justices present: Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Roxy Stephens. Upon a motion by Greg Wright and second by Angie Walker, the Quorum Court voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and to approve the minutes as emailed. A roll call vote was taken. Yes –Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright and Greg Wright. Absent – Roxy Stephens. No – None. The motion passed.

Committee and Other Reports –

Lori House, CEO of Sevier County Medical Center was present to report on the progress of the new hospital construction and Financial report for same. Ms. House presented a Financial statement produced by Horne Group. She reported that the expected completion date is August 5 and opening date for the hospital is September 20. She indicated that glass is going in now; Bricks are going on; Generator is installed. They will be meeting with AirEvac to determine where dormitories will be placed and making final plans. Lori introduced some new hospital employees: Jennifer McKnight, Candace McDonald, and Keisha Crawford; Wendell Ward, and Matt Satterfield. Angie Walker asked about Meditech stating that Horne could not provide A/P services. People are being brought on board as Meditech needs them to help set up their part of the system. This is necessary for everything to flow smoothly in the materials and purchasing processes. David Wright asked about the Financial report and if they could provide more detail similar to how they had received reports in the past. Lori stated that next month they would be providing detailed financial information. She also stated that Horne is helping with hospital process set-up as well as helping to set appropriate salaries for hospital employees.

SWEMS Quarterly Report – Megan submitted a written report that shows calls, transports, non-transports, and other. Other category is possibly where call was cancelled. The report showed October – December. Some equipment on the ambulances have been updated/replaced. All paramedic trucks have been outfitted with new cardiac monitors. These have internet connectivity and information can be seen by hospital before patient arrives so that preparation can be made ahead of patient arrival. There is now ability for face-to-face with a doctor while in transport. The ambulance service will now be tracking all that they do. This is a new procedure for a paper trail of all services rendered. Megan reported that there has been a need made known for a piece of equipment know as a Stokes Basket. This is to carry a patient out of a precarious situation. She is proposing that one be purchased to be available at the Central Fire Department to be accessible in the southern part of the county. Kenneth Currence asked if there had been a policy change regarding taking a patient to the nearest hospital. She told him there was protocol in place that deals with the individual situation. They are not allowed to take anyone farther than 50 miles away from the county. The hospitals in that 50-mile radius are Nashville, Idabel, and Texarkana. Angie Walker asked why the trucks are not completely outfitted. This is because of the requirement for a Paramedic or EMT to be on the truck. A basic truck can have a CPR certified person manning it.

Review of Legislative Audit for 2020. Judge Ray asked if everyone received their copy in the mail. He stated that there were no written findings in the audit for 2020. No action is to be taken in this review.

Old Business – There is no old business.

New Business –

1. The first agenda item is the confirmation of the appointment of Helga Beunrrostro to the Sevier County Housing Authority Board. A motion was made by Greg Wright and seconded by David Wright to confirm the appointment. A roll call vote was taken. Yes –Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, David Wright and Greg Wright. No – None. Abstain – Roger Whitmore. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. David Wright asked if all appointees are contacted ahead of appointment. Judge Ray stated that they are recommended by the Director and have indicated that they would serve prior to this confirmation.
2. Second on the agenda is the confirmation of the appointment of Tawana Newton to the Sevier County Housing Authority Board. David Wright made a motion to confirm the appointment. Angie Walker seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Abstain – Roger Whitmore. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.
3. The next agenda item is a request to confirm the appointment of Zahir Kamrudden to the Sevier County Housing Authority Board. Angie Walker made a motion to approve, seconded by David Wright. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Abstain Roger Whitmore. Absent Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.
4. Item four on the agenda is a proposed ordinance establishing a new Fund #1006 for ARPA Revenue Replacement Fund. The ordinance was read by Treasurer Heather Barnes. Angie asked what this money is. It is American Rescue Plan money. A motion was made by Angie Walker and seconded by Greg Wright to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the 2nd reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. Judge Ray read the ordinance for the 2nd reading. A motion was made by Angie Walker and seconded by David Wright to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the third reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. Judge Ray read the ordinance for the third reading. David Wright made a motion to approve the ordinance. Earl Battiest seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn

Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.

5. The next agenda item is a proposed ordinance establishing a new fund #3509 for the Sevier County/ UA Cossatot Med Tech Project Fund. The ordinance was read by Treasurer Heather Barnes. This is for grant money to upgrade the Med Tech Lab at the college. A motion was made by Marilyn Archer and seconded by David Wright to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the 2nd reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. Judge Ray read the ordinance for the 2nd reading. A motion was made by Greg Wright and seconded by Angie Walker to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the third reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. Judge Ray read the ordinance for the third reading. David Wright made a motion to approve the ordinance. Earl Battiest seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.
6. The sixth agenda item is a request for approval of a 3% cost of living raise for Terry Hernandez and Ana Mejia-RSAT coordinators. Sheriff Gentry explained that this was not addressed in the 2022 budget approvals. He stated that this would increase the county's in-kind match required for the grant. Earl Battiest made a motion to approve the increase. Angie Walker seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.
7. Next on the agenda was a request for a \$2.50 per hour raise for the Sheriff's Deputies. Sheriff Gentry explained that he is requesting this to Sevier County Deputies' pay more comparable with surrounding departments. Sheriff Gentry presented a wage and cost comparison with surrounding departments, as did County Clerk Akin. Certified deputies currently start at \$17 per hour. They are officers of the court as well as handling calls. They are on call with severe weather, etc. Robert stated that he had lost 8 deputies since he took office. He feels that if the pay is raised it might help retain deputies that are here and already certified. Earl Battiest, who is on the Budget Committee stated that he felt that a \$1 increase would be sufficient to bring county deputies into a competitive range. Sheriff Gentry said he would like \$2.50 per hour but would take any increase approved. Angie Walker invited all Quorum Court members to take part in the budgeting process. After some discussion Kenneth Currence made a motion to approve a \$2.50 increase and to appropriate to the 2022 budget accordingly. Angie Walker seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes- Marilyn Archer, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore. No – Earl Battiest, Greg Wright, and David Wright. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed. This raise will take affect February 20.
8. The final agenda item was a request to transfer funds received for the sale of hay cut from the airport property from the County General Fund to the Airport Fund. The Judge explained that this was sale of surplus hay. This was the first time to have surplus hay and it was sold by the bid process. David Wright made a motion to approve the transfer. The motion was seconded by Earl Battiest. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Angie Walker, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Roxy Stephens. The motion passed.

Before announcements, David Wright asked to speak. He stated that he had received a letter from an interested tax payer that did not submit a name. He said he didn't give much credence to such if a person was not willing to sign the letter. He stated that the letter said in essence that they felt the Hospital Board and CEO were not transparent in regard to their actions and proceedings. He indicated that he had met with CEO Lori House. She told him all meetings were live streamed and open to the public. She also said the Board of Governors is involved in all decisions other than the CEO's day to day duties. David said he was satisfied with her response and felt confident in what she had told him. He also said he felt she and the board was doing a good job. Lori stated that she works hand in hand with the Hospital Board and talks almost daily with Greg and Steve. She said if anyone ever has a question or concerns, they should feel free to contact her. She thanked the Court for their support.

Earl Battiest wanted to have it on record that when the QC approves appointments, they are not doing background checks or anything that involves this. We are just approving the recommendation that the board or director has already vetted appropriately.

Announcements – The County Judge reminded everyone that there would be a dedication ceremony for benches purchased in memory of Justices of the Peace, Charles Keels and Michael Archer.

Adjournment –

With no further business to discuss, David Wright made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Greg Wright. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,



Debbie Akin
County Clerk