

MINUTES

SEVIER COUNTY QUORUM COURT MEETING

2:00 P.M., MONDAY May 9, 2022

The Sevier County Quorum Court met at 2:00 P.M., Monday, May 9, 2022, in the Sevier County Courthouse Courtroom with County Judge Greg Ray presiding. The meeting was opened with prayer by Clerk Akin, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance lead by Judge Ray. The roll was called with the following Justices present: Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker and Roger Whitmore. Upon a motion by Roxy Stephens and second by Greg Wright, 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, Roxy Stephens, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker and Roger Whitmore. Roger Whitmore arrived at 2:09. No – None. The motion passed.

Committee and Other Reports –

Lori House, CEO of Sever 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 still firm for the Hospital keys to be turned over on August 5. Lori informed the court that all the stolen items have been replaced. The drywall on the inside of the hospital is about 50% complete. Exterior masonry is about 90% complete. The hospital is right on time with Medicaid and Medicare applications according to the attorney. Lori informed the court that starting this past January, payments are being deducted from the bond money received by the county for the hospital bonds. Earl Battiest asked how much had been spent to date, of the bond money. Lori told him she thought it was close to \$18,000,000 but would have better information at the end of the week. Lori introduced a new employee for the hospital: Kayla Castor, who will be in charge of Risk Management.

Judge Ray reported on items of county property that have been deemed to be junk, scrap, discarded, or of no value to the county, and that are being removed from county inventory. There was no action required. David Wright asked and was assured that all computer hard drives are cleared of information before they are removed from inventory.

New Business –

1. The first agenda item is a request to confirm the appointment of Tawana Newton to the Sevier County Housing Authority Board. A motion was made by David Wright and seconded by Roxy Stephens to approve the appointment. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Abstain – Earl Battiest. Absent – Angie Walker. The motion passed.
2. Agenda item 2 is a request to confirm the appointment of Cathy Tallant to the Sevier County Equalization Board. David Wright made a motion to approve the appointment. Earl Battiest seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Kenneth Currence, Earl Battiest, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Angie Walker. The motion passed.
3. Next on the agenda was a request to confirm the re-appointment of Mildred Walker to the Sevier County Equalization Board. Roxy Stephens made a motion to confirm the appointment seconded by Greg Wright. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Angie Walker. The motion passed.
4. The next agenda item is a request for Sevier County to Sponsor a RDOT Grant for the De Queen Lake Multi-use Trail Construction Project. This is a Southwest Arkansas Planning & Development Grant and requires a 20% match. This was discussed after item 6. Judge Ray explained that this is the same thing that Dr. Lofton asked the county to support a couple of years ago. Dr. Lofton was not willing to go through the Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development Council and the Quorum Court did not approve at the time. Judge Ray said that there were representatives present who are actively working on this project. Roxy Stephens asked what it would cost the county. Judge Ray stated that there is a 20% match, but some of that is in kind match. Melinda Taggart was present as well as Lorna Branson. David Wright asked about the maintenance requirement of the project or trails. Melinda explained that they have a group of volunteers who will maintain the trails. The group is called Friends of the De Queen Lake Trails. She also explained that they will be raising funds for the 20% match that is required. If the match is not there, the grant will not be awarded, or less will be awarded according to what is raised for the match. The amount requested is \$500,000. The match amount would be \$125,000. Of this match they would like the county to award \$5000.
5. Item five on the agenda is a proposed Resolution Expressing the Willingness of Sevier County to Utilize Federal-Aid Transportation Alternatives Program funds. David Wright made a motion to approve the resolution. Earl Battiest seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Angie Walker. The motion passed.
6. The last item of new business is a proposed Resolution Expressing the Willingness of Sevier County, Arkansas to Utilize Federal-Aid Recreational Trails Program Funds. Lorna explained that these are two separate grants that they were advised to apply for. They cannot receive both, but if they qualify for one, they qualify for the other. David Wright asked what the difference is in the two grants. Melinda explained that the match on this grant cannot be in kind. It is all monetary. Earl asked what the cost of the trails would be. Melinda stated that they would cost a lot more than the grants award, but the trails will be built in stages. They are trying to complete one section of the trails with this phase. The group is also applying for a grant through Blue Cross for \$150,000. This will be a multi-year project and they can apply for some of the grants each year. The Blue Cross

grant does not require any match. Roxy Stephens made a motion to approve the resolution. Earl stated that he wanted to set a cap on the amount the county would be responsible for. Melinda explained that if they didn't have the funds, they would not get the grant. The maximum was set at \$25,000 that could be paid by the county. The motion was seconded by Earl Battiest. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Marilyn Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Evelyn Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. No – None. Absent – Angie Walker. The motion passed.

Old Business - Discussion of raises for county employees.

Clerk Akin explained some reports that she had handed out prior to the meeting. These reports give comparisons to other counties, the City of De Queen, and local business, Pilgrim's. There was also a spreadsheet that broke down the cost of the proposed raises in increments. There was some discussion about raises or possible bonuses. Due to this information being presented today, Roxy Stephens made a motion that this be tabled until the June 13 Quorum Court meeting. Greg Wright stated that this same action should have been taken before the raise was given to the Sheriff's department earlier in the year. He said that the court had made this mess and now they would need to figure a way out of it. He also stated that it would only be fair to give all employees a raise. David Wright asked Earl Battiest if the Budget Committee could meet and discuss revenue and cost of bonuses before the next meeting of the Quorum Court. Earl stated that they could do that. Earl Battiest seconded the motion made by Roxy Stephens. The motion passed to table this item until the June Quorum Court meeting.

Announcements – Roxy Stephens announced that there will be Grand Re-opening of Stephens Old Tyme Mill beginning May 17th and lasting four days.

Adjournment –

With no further business to discuss, Earl Battiest made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Roger Whitmore. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,



Debbie Akin
County Clerk