

MINUTES
SEVIER COUNTY QUORUM COURT MEETING
2:00 P.M., MONDAY JUNE 8, 2020

The Sevier County Quorum Court met at 2:00 p.m., Monday, June 8, 2020, in the De Queen High School Cafeteria 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: Michael Archer, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, and Greg Wright. Absent: Earl Battiest, Angie Walker, and David Wright. Upon a motion by Roxy Stephens and second by Roger Whitmore, 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 – Michael Archer, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, and Greg Wright. Absent – Earl Battiest, Angie Walker, and David Wright. No- None. The motion passed.

Committee and Other Reports

Update from Hospital Board of Governors – Board Chair, Steve Cole was in attendance to give an update. Mr. Cole told the court that the hospital bonds are scheduled to sell in August. Mr. Bowman with the Friday Firm will be meeting with the Quorum Court in the next few weeks to pass an ordinance allowing the sale to begin. The hospital project is about 1 month behind schedule just due to effects of the pandemic. The board talked about the contracts with Nabholz that needed some revisions. These should be addressed in the next few days. Nabholz will be hiring and paying all the contractors who build the hospital. Hospital sales tax has been collected since April. We will actually start to see that in July in our county. Our sales tax projections seem to be up even with the pandemic. Final design of the hospital should be finished this week and that will allow us to get a cost for the hospital. The time has come for us to start paying these companies that we are partnering with to get the hospital done. The Board is asking for RFP requests from local financial institutions and hope to get a line of credit for .5 million. A treasurer has been elected for the Board. This is Greg Revels. Financial procedures for the hospital are being worked on by the Friday firm. We currently owe WD&D \$137,000; \$43,000 to Accountant Bill Couch; we also owe the Friday Firm; the county needs to be reimbursed for expenses they have paid. There is a tremendous obligation to be taken care of in the near future. A signed contracts depository will be housed at the Friday Firm. The Friday Firm is also helping with the by-laws for the Hospital Foundation. This Foundation will be set up in the near future. We already have people wanting to donate money for the foundation. The foundation can have an unlimited number of members. Roxy Stephens asked if they were on target to break ground. Steve Cole stated that they are about one month behind schedule. They think they will break ground in August. The hospital is on track to open in December of 2021.

Old Business

New Business

The First agenda item is a proposed resolution providing authority to execute a CARES Act grant with the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration on behalf of Sevier County, Arkansas. The resolution was read by Judge Ray. David Wright asked how much it was going to cost the county. Judge Ray said this is a full grant and the County does not pay anything. A motion was made by Greg Wright to approve the Resolution. Roxy Stephens seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed.

Next on the agenda is a request for a transfer of appropriations within the Solid Waste Department Budget to provide for wage adjustments of two personnel positions as follows: \$2500 from line item 1005 Overtime and Other Premium Compensations; \$2006 to line item 1001 Salaries Full-Time, \$152 to line item 1006 Social Security Matching, \$302 to line item 1007 Retirement Matching, and \$40 to line item 1010 Workmen's Compensation. The Judge explained that he was being unsuccessful in getting applicants for truck driving jobs at the Solid Waste Dept. This will bring the drivers' pay at Solid Waste up to the same level as the Road dept. A motion was made by Roxy Stephens and seconded by Earl Battiest to approve the Resolution. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed.

The third agenda item is a proposed ordinance establishing new fund numbers and fund names as required by state law for the annual operating budget. These funds will account for monies received and designated for the 1% sales tax bond for the County Hospital. Treasurer Heather Barnes read the ordinance in its entirety on the first reading. A motion was made by Greg Wright and seconded by Roger Whitmore to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the 2nd reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed. The ordinance was read a second time by Treasurer Barnes by title only. A motion was made by David Wright and seconded by Greg Wright to suspend the rule and place the ordinance on the 3rd reading by title only. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed. The ordinance was read a third time by Treasurer Barnes by title only. A motion was made by David Wright and seconded by Greg Wright to approve the ordinance. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed by a two-thirds vote.

Agenda item four is a request for the county to pay 1/3 of the cost of radio advertising for tourism in Sevier County. The other two thirds of the cost will be split between the U of A - Cossatot and Tourism. The advertising will be done in Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock, and Texarkana, as well as local radio stations. A motion was made by Roxy Stephens and second by Greg Wright to approve this expenditure. A roll call vote was taken. Yes – Michael Archer, Earl Battiest, Kenneth Currence, Charles Keels, Roxy Stephens, Roger Whitmore, David Wright, and Greg Wright. Absent – Angie Walker. No- None. The motion passed.

Announcements – There are no announcements.

Judge Ray asked if the Librarian knew when the Library would open up. She stated that she did not know due to the pandemic. She said if the case numbers keep rising, they will not open till the number of cases begins to decline. The judge commented that the thing that worries him is the fact that people can't go to the library and fill out the census.

Mike Archer commented that the sales tax figures we have now are for April and he would like the Treasurer's report to reflect that. The report she puts out says it is a report for April but the numbers were collected in March.

David Wright asked if the Jail and Sheriff's expenditures were looking better. Mike Archer stated that they seem to be better. David asked if the revenues for those departments are going into the correct accounts. Treasurer Barnes stated that all revenues are being receipted into the correct funds. Mike Archer commented that due to lower number of inmates that costs have gone down somewhat. Chris Wolcott, Jail Administrator informed the court that we are housing around 40 prisoners currently. David Wright asked what the cost is per inmate per day. Chris stated that it is about \$56 per day. David Wright commented that at the last meeting there was discussion on how to get a handle on the spending at the jail and Sheriff's dept. Has anything been done? Greg Wright stated that Angie Walker asks at every meeting if the Jail Committee has met. It has not met at all to this point. Roger Whitmore said he didn't think the committee was designed for that purpose. David asked if it might be smart to have a County Comptroller? The last couple of years they have been over-budget about \$100,000. He stated we must do something different or we will eventually run out of money.

Judge Ray stated that District Court will resume tomorrow after being on hold for two months.

Mike Archer asked when the courthouse was going to open. Judge Ray stated that we are open by appointment only as of last Friday, June 5.

David Wright asked about Covid-19 statistics. He commented that our larger numbers seem to be due to more testing. Judge Ray said that is correct. David asked about demographics. The judge stated that the Governor gave those demographics in a conference. Husqvarna and Pilgrim are large contributors to these numbers. Judge Ray explained that these cases are the reason that we are soft opening at the courthouse. He explained that with District Court they will be entering at one door and exiting at another. David asked about the video arraignment equipment that had been purchased. Are we going to be able to use that? Judge Ray explained that it is not really useful for District Court unless the case is for someone in jail at the time. It is however very useful for Circuit Court.

Kenneth Currence stated that he had an elected official call him about an issue with a postage meter. He commented that the two officials just needed to get together to resolve this issue. It is not something to be addressed by the Quorum Court. Clerk Akin informed the court that this is necessary to set up appointments in their office, which is where the postage meter is currently housed. There has been another office that didn't feel they could necessarily meet the time given to post their mail. This was resolved by that office calling to make sure the office was empty of customers and they come at that time. She stated that the postage meter could even be moved to a different location if necessary.

Mike Archer made a statement that he felt the courthouse employees should be working in their offices and not from home. He said the elected officials need to be there representing the public and their money. Clerk Akin informed the court that her office has been rotating so that only one person was working in the office at a time. Those who were not in the office were working from home. The office has two laptops that were set up specifically to do that in such a case as this. This has been in their disaster plan for a pandemic for several years now. The plan was implemented to stop the spread of the virus. She also stated that as of June 1 her office employees are all back in the office on a regular schedule again.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah K. Akin". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Debbie Akin
County Clerk