

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON APRIL 5th, 2022 AT 6:30 IN THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OFFICE OF THE WILCOX COUNTY COURTHOUSE.

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Mel Powell	Chairman
Jowan Johnson	Vice Chairman
Lanier Keene	Commissioner
Alfonza Hall	Commissioner
Clay Reid	Commissioner
Toni Sawyer	County Attorney
County Manager	Michael Pomirko
County Clerk	Indya Tisdol
EMS Director	Charles Futch
Road Superintendent	Adam Dowdy
EMA	Larry Brown
Sheriff	Robert Rodgers
Sheriff Dept.	Michael Welch

Chairman Mel Powell called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Lanier Keene gave the invocation.

All gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Lanier Keene made a motion to approve the prior month's meetings.

Commissioner Alfonza Hall seconded that motion that carried unanimously.

Don Wood was in attendance to introduce a board member of Middle Georgia EMC who wanted to discuss future broadband in Wilcox County and the cities. Mr. Wood spoke briefly on the county relationship and Middle Georgia EMC relationship and how it has been longstanding and good. He mentioned that the broadband coming would be good for the county; and also, initially the board asked for financial assistance then reneged on their request because they thought the funds would no longer be needed. He mentioned that former County Manager, Paula Ball, was very helpful and interested in getting the county broadband through their new endeavor. However, funding became an issue because Middle Georgia EMC stated that they were expecting to get funding to cover the project and would not need assistance from the county. Mr. Wood said they could get the project done without any funding, but it would be a bigger strain on them if they do so and they didn't want that. They want to offer the best service and price, and they feel good with the progress so far.

Don Wood introduced Randy Crenshaw ,who manages the co-op, to the commissioners so that he discuss exactly what the broadband service would offer, how it would help and how much it would cost since he dealt with it every day and has more insight on the progress behind the project. Randy Crenshaw stated that a member of Middle Georgia EMC saw the need for the county to have broadband internet to the area. Mr. Crenshaw stated that they didn't know that grant money was available at the time the project began, and initially zeroed in on seeking help from the counties to see what funds they could allocate to help.

Mr. Randy Crenshaw today stated that a lot of work has been done within the last past two years and foresee the first customer being connected the first of May, 2022. Within two years, Middle Georgia EMC expects to have the system finished. They have about 1800 miles wide and 8 thousand polls that will be in place for this project. Mr. Crenshaw stated that they have changed about 600 poles so far which should bring better electric service to their members, also. So far, 10 miles of underground fiber has been installed and about 60 miles of overhead fiber with everything being on track.

Mr. Crenshaw stated that the grant money that was awarded a few months ago, Middle Georgia EMC didn't receive it. He explained that basically if there were 200 applicants then only 49 received funding. He also mentioned that Middle Georgia EMC was about number four down the list from receiving the grant. Another grant will be announced in May, Mr. Crenshaw stated. Middle Georgia EMC plans to apply for this grant and have a response by June or July stating if they will be awarded funding or not.

Mr. Crenshaw asked the commissioners to contribute \$500,000 to the project and if they do so then they will reimburse the county if they receive a substantial amount of funds. Mr. Crenshaw said that he was told the money is guaranteed; however it is a possibility they won't receive anything and if so, they plan to apply for an even larger grant next year. As of now, Mr. Crenshaw stated that Middle Georgia EMC is funding this project with funds from Middle Georgia EMC. He stated that the EMC around them have been awarded anywhere from 15-19 million dollars. He stated it would help them if the county could contribute, and it would help move the project further along. Mr. Crenshaw said that it is not essential that the county donates, but it would help because the customers they serve, we also serve.

Commissioner Lanier Keene asked Mr. Crenshaw if he was asking the county to donate the money they initially agreed to contribute. Mr. Crenshaw responded and said that that is what they would like. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated we would have to get the numbers refigured to see if it was something the county could still offer.

Don Wood chimed in and stated that they did mention to former County Manager, Paula Ball, that the funds would not be needed. Since that conversation, the funds Middle Georgia EMC was expecting have not yet been received as quickly as they hoped it would. Initially, the project was projected to be up and running within a year, but delays have caused somewhat of a halt such as changing polls, changing lines, and other issues.

Mr. Crenshaw said that changing polls out is a slow process, but once they are changed out and get the fiber up, the process will speed up especially internet broadband. He also stated that they are going as fast as they can go at the moment. He mentioned how the services would help bring money to Wilcox County, in relation to faster broadband services for customers and taxes for the county.

Mr. Crenshaw stated that the pricing would be affordable and beneficial to all. The starting rate would be \$49 and could go up to \$100 which is still lower than competitors. Also, the speed of services would be much faster. He also stated that just about all of the fiber is purchased and polls. On the electrical side, they are having a few problems getting transformers, meters, and wires at the moment.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked Mr. Crenshaw what was the time frame on the 500,000 they are requesting. Mr. Crenshaw stated that the request was not a dire want and the money they are asking for will not break or make the project, but it would help. He also stated they have ample resources. It would just ease the pressure to have it. Mr. Don Wood said they aren't slowing down, but they appreciated whatever help the county could do.

Coroner, Janice Brown, stated that she and Michael have been looking for her a new coroner van and stated they only found one in the state of Georgia. She stated she didn't know what the budget was for the van, and Michael responded by stating that the budget was for \$37,500. Michael stated the dealer was asking for a \$17,500 difference which seemed to be price gouging, in his opinion. Janice responded by saying that the dealer said that they can add up to five thousand dollars to every vehicle because of the shortage she guesses. Janice stated that she didn't want a truck and that they can't find one if she did. She needs room for two cots that are at least 6 or 7 feet long, supplies, towels, sheets, and it's harder to do with a truck. Michael stated that he asked were there other options they could go with if they couldn't get their hands on a van, and Mrs. Linda said yes. A letter would have to be sent to Ms. Linda about what wants to be done, and it would be wise to stay in the price range that we have, stated Michael.

Commissioner Lanier Keene asked when the grant has to be turned in. Michael responded and said by mid-May or end of May. Janice mentioned that there are other coroners in surrounding counties who may want to purchase her van. Also, there may be option of trading in her current van, she mentioned. Janice said that she reached out to a dealer in Atlanta, they told her that they don't sell to the public and that all of their vehicles are contracted out. She also called, Orlando and Indiana.

EMA director, Larry Brown, stated that he attended the Global Communication meeting to see what went wrong with the radios and to see if they are still under warranty. Commissioner Clay Reid asked Larry where were we with the ponds, and he responded it's still in the moving forward stage; he could call skip to see what's the hold up on the engineer's side.

EMS radios went out twice, stated EMS director Charles Futch.

Sheriff Rodgers stated that he had spoken with Michael twice about the internet service at the Sheriff department. The internet hadn't been working properly for two days, according to Sheriff Rodgers. He stated they weren't able to do live scans. He mentioned they had to get Windstream to send an I.T. guy to check out their lines because the internet service would pick up and drop continuously. He stated the Windstream guy said the Sheriff department needs to bring fiber in the building, and according to Sheriff Rodgers, fiber is already in the building. The jail inmate phone system that was put in not long ago is when fiber should have been brought into the building. He mentioned if they switch over to fiber, the speed should increase their internet speed and they should also switch their phones over to internet phones too, state Sheriff Rodgers. He stated that it would not be that big of an increase. Sheriff Rodgers said that his department cannot continue to operate with the internet service dropping in and out. The internet is used for booking, fingerprinting, and traffic stops.

Sheriff Rodgers also touched on mileage that occurs when transporting inmates. 3342 miles went toward transporting inmates for the month of March, he stated almost totaling 3500 miles for one month. He stated he couldn't tell how many man hours that took to work his deputies. Sheriff Rodgers stated that he had to take a deputy off the road to complete transports.

Commissioner Clay Reid asked Sheriff Rodgers was court part of the reason he had to take deputies off the road. Sheriff Rodgers responded, yes. They have traveled to Valdosta, East Point, Calhoun, and Athens is some of the locations. Sheriff Rodgers stated that he needs one person just for transportation and mentioned that he asked for two deputies last September. He said he never heard any update on his request.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked was this back log due to COVID. Sheriff mentioned he had no room for overflow during COVID and many inmates were put on probation and released. The probationers are all over the place and have to be picked up for court stated Sheriff Rodgers. He mentioned that he is court mandated to pick them up.

Road Superintendent, Adam Dowdy, requested to put three tractors up for surplus to purchase a bigger John Deere. He thinks all the dirt from the Landfill has been disposed with everything coming to a close, and the wells will be put in next.

Commissioner Lanier Keene motioned to grant Adam permission to sale the tractors for surplus. Commissioner Jowan Johnson seconded the motion that carried unanimously.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that a few cities responded to the radio tower update from the worksheet he emailed. Two cities denied the offer, and he hadn't heard from the other two cities. Chairman Mel Powell asked Michael to check with Crisp Co. about getting a quote for potentially being the county 911 provider. Once we receive quote from Crisp County, we should be able to move forward. We should hear back from Crisp County within 2-3 weeks after meeting with the representative about what it would cost to operate on their end considering moving our trunk line, call volume, upkeep and radio compatibility.

County Manager informed the commissioners that Shannon Stephens is our new recreational director and wasn't able to be at the meeting tonight due to games.

Heart of Georgia wants to come April 14th at 4pm to discuss the new technology via the Federal Aviation section of the government.

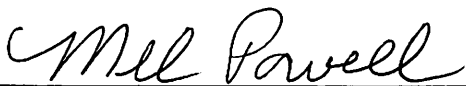
Michael wants to get the budget done early so that it can be adopted by September before the new fiscal year in October, and also the LOST negotiation.

He also informed the commissioners that Caroline Elsberry, Tax Commissioner, will be closing the Tax Office Monday May 9th and will reopen May 12th.

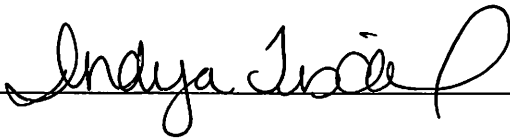
After speaking with Glenn Gregory, Michael stated that he should have the final set of plans this week and will run a 30 day ad in the newspaper and once the bid is up, it will take place in the courthouse.

Commissioner Jowan Johnson asked if the wiregrass building was ready to look at. Michael told the commissioners that the exterior door keys were purchased only until the commissioners can go and check it out and see exactly what they want to do with the building.

Commissioner Lanier Keene motioned to adjourn. Vice Chairman Jowan Johnson seconded the motion that carried unanimously.



Chairman, Mel Powell



County Clerk, Indya Tisdol