

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD ON AUGUST 9th, 2022 AT 5 :30 P.M. IN THE COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM IN THE WILCOX COUNTY COURTHOUSE.

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Mel Powell	Chairman
Jowan Johnson	Vice Chairman
Alfonza Hall	Commissioner
Lanier Keene	Commissioner
Clay Reid	Commissioner
Jamie Hanley	Incoming County Commissioner
Michael Pomirko	County Manager
Indya Tisdol	County Clerk
Charles Futch	EMS Director
Robert Rodgers	Sheriff
Christy Welch	Sheriff Dept.
Michael Welch	Sheriff Dept.
Amber Mitchell	Sheriff Dept.

Chairman Mel Powell called the meeting to order.

Vice Chairman Jowan Johnson gave the invocation.

All gave the Pledge.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, began the meeting by stating that he had done a lot of research for the Commissioners to read. The research went back as far as 2020. The research included the number of deputies, jailers and office staff based on the budget year of 2020 at the Sheriff's office. In 2020, the Sheriff's office held 9 full time positions and 2 part time positions on the Sheriff side. On the jail side, it held 4 full time positions, 1 part time position and 1 doctor. There was and is still one deputy at the courthouse as a security officer. Currently there should be 8 full time positions and 1 part time position on the Sheriff side but there are actually 11 full time positions on the Sheriff's side and 1 part time position. The school resource officer position will be moved to its own line item so that the salary is accounted for separately since the school refunds their pay. Also, the security officer position will be included in the building and plants budget. On the jail side there should be 4 full time positions, 1 part time position, and 1 doctor. Currently, there are 6 full time positions and 1 part time position, and still 1 doctor. The Sheriff department and the jail side actually now has more positions than budgeted for, County Manager stated. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, said that in the past, the previous County Manager, Paula Ball and himself sat down and discussed with the Sheriff and administration that a position was supposed to be dropped. Sheriff Rodgers stated that he doesn't recall agreeing to that because he cannot afford to lose any deputies. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked the Sheriff what positions he doesn't need and that taking away two positions would help, in reference to the budget. The Sheriff replied that two cooks and one full time person is already gone. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, informed the Sheriff that benefits may hurt employees if they receive and increase. The Sheriff said that many of his employees do not carry insurance because they cannot afford it. The nurse practitioner and four others only have it. Sheriff Rodgers said that after Eisner leaves, he is going to be in a bad position. Sheriff stated that at \$17.22 he doesn't know if he can get anyone to work for that amount. He asked what are the commissioners doing to advance the Sheriff department and that he felt like the Ag Center, Recreation Department, and all of these other projects get more attention than his department. The Sheriff stated that he was just informing the commissioners on the situation, needs, and struggles in his department. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, told the Sheriff that a lot of the work at the Rec. Dept. was done because of Grants he applied for and received. The Sheriff said that his department has been applying for grants as well.

Commissioner, Clay Reid, stated that last October the budget was set and that the county currently does not have the funds for the increase. Also, he mentioned that the Sheriff's office is currently over their budget. He suggested that the Sheriff sit down and talk with the county manger about what they could

possibly accomplish during the next budget year. Commissioner, Clay Reid, also stated that the state should be responsible for the transport of the prisoners and not the county. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that he and the Sheriff could have a sit down in morning if that was okay with the Sheriff. The Sheriff said that he has court the next morning, also has to travel to Turner and Pulaski County, and then a meeting with the school after that. The meeting would have to be after that and when he is not running calls.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, stated that he received phone calls about more security being needed during the football games.

Commissioner Clay Reid said that some of the help may have to come from the Georgia State Patrol.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, stated that he is seeing deputies transport everywhere because of the shortage of employees everywhere.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, says inflation has hit everyone in all departments in regards to the budget. Looking at a \$2 raise for the Sheriff department means that a raise would have to be considered for everyone in the county. The Sheriff responded and said that employees in other departments aren't on the side of the road patrolling or answering calls. Commissioner Clay Reid said that they didn't sign up for it either. A business owner and citizen of Pitts said to Commissioner Keene that they could just tell the other departments no since they are good at doing that. Commissioner, Clay Reid, said that he cannot vote on the matter anyways due to his wife being an employee at the Sheriff Department. The business owner from Pitts asked what departments in the county are least necessary or what projects could be put on hold to get the most important projects and departments up to speed.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, said that the three largest departments are Sheriff, EMS, and Road. He suggested that a policy be adopted next year and that the county currently keeps spending tight.

Chairman, Mel Powell, mentioned that elected officials are to receive a \$5,000 raise that will come out of the county budget, but it is mandated by the state. The business owner stated that in the House Bill 911, it gives funding for each department. Chairman Mel Powell responded to her and said that ACCG is working on getting updates on the bill.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked the Sheriff if he could meet at 4p.m the next day and the Sheriff agreed.

Chairman, Mel Powell, stated that if we had the funds, we could make the necessary budget adjustments but we cannot do away with any departments especially the Road department.

The business owner asked if the money for the elevator could be used since the project hasn't been started on. Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, asked the county manger how the elevator project is coming along. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, responded that it is next after the EMS project. Commissioner Lanier Keene stated that the elevator project was out of our control, just like the situation at the Landfill. The elevator project must continue. Sheriff Rodgers stated that his message has not changed. Commissioner Lanier Keene said the county would be \$200,000 in the hole if the raises are approved. Sheriff Rodgers said that he is willing to go through the budget with anyone about the money he has spent dollar by dollar.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, said was looking into getting the Sheriff vehicles with ARP money and replaces his cars that are not currently up to standard. Sheriff Rodgers told Michael he appreciates him for trying, but if he doesn't have deputies to put in the cars then it's useless. Michael asked the Sheriff if the issue in pay was the jailers or the deputies. Sheriff Rodgers said the jailers cannot survive off of \$11.22 per hour. One guy had a sick child and was stressed because he didn't have insurance and couldn't afford to not work, but he had to take off to be with his child.

Deputy Chavez said that Helena is paying \$19.25 with a \$3,000 sign on bonus. He said that he doesn't have benefits and has a 10 year old that he barely sees. He also stated that he does translation, works at night and answers every time the Sheriff calls. The deputy said that you have to work 3 years before benefits kick in and most times he is running on fumes. He said that he has been offered several jobs because he is bilingual. He is losing his partner in September. He has had a gun pointed at him and pulled on him. The city of Abbeville doesn't help because they are at the prison busy chasing drones, stated Chavez. Sometimes, the deputy said, he doesn't even get a chance to eat because he is answering calls. He

said that they do a little bit of everything because if there are no jailers present then they have to their job as well. He said that it all works hand in hand.

The Sheriff's jail budget has doubled. The commissioners asked if it was due to crime, state prisoners, or other things. The Sheriff responded that all of the above was the reason the jail budget has doubled. Incoming County Commissioner, Jamie Hanley, stated that we should not be housing anyone for three to four years because the D.A. won't take up their case. Jamie Hanley also said to the business owner that even though the bill reads that way, the county will be responsible for appropriating those funds.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that he and the Sheriff can try to meet tomorrow at four and see what they can come up with.

Chairman, Mel Powell said that there is nothing they can really do at the moment and the Sheriff said that he cannot either. Sheriff Rodgers said that he isn't trying to be difficult, but he is just stating the troubles he is having.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson asked County Manager, Michael Pomirko, if he could have an answer by then for the Sheriff. Michael responded that the ARP pot of money is a pot that is not gaining and will eventually run out. He said that he would have to check into guidelines and that the money would only buy 6 month or maybe a year.

Incoming County Commissioner, Jamie Handley, stated that the Sheriff is currently over budget, not fully staffed, and hasn't been fully staffed since Hank Collier resigned and that we would be way over budget if all positions were filled. He said that the cost shouldn't be on the back of tax payers because some of the problems the Sheriff faces are those of the state. He said that he isn't saying that the sheriff department isn't important, but EMS is also and they may want an increase as well.

Sheriff Rodgers said that there are 85 cases on the docket. Investigator, Christy Welch, stated that she received an email that the state will not be sending the inmates and that they would have to be picked up.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, stated that if it means anything, they appreciated the Sheriff and his department for all that they do. Commissioner, Clay Reid, said to the Sheriff that he doesn't want him to think we don't want them to have the increase, but we have to find the money first. Michael said that if the Sheriff needs him to get out of the office and do anything to help, he would. The Sheriff responded and said he may need him on the 18th.

Commissioner Lanier Keene asked the Sheriff if the state pays \$55 per day. Investigator Christy Welch stated that is only after they are sentenced.

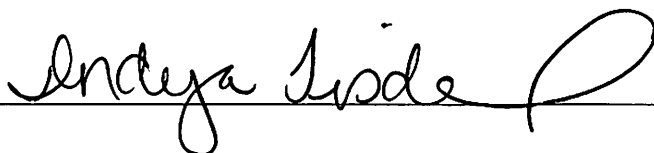
Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, asked who our contact person for transport is. Sheriff Rodgers said it didn't know the names off hand, but it is two ladies. Sheriff Rodgers said they have to go and pick up every inmate.

Investigator, Christy Welch, spoke and said that she fill a lot of hats at the Sheriff's office. One thing she has always stood for was the underdogs and she doesn't want to leave. She said that her targets are people who commit sexual assault and that it happens more often than people think it does in this county. She said that we need to have people here to protect the children and elderly, but the pay is a huge issue.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, motioned to adjourn the meeting with there being no further business. Commissioner Clay Reid seconded the motion that carried unanimously.



Mel Powell, Chairman



Indya Tisdol, County Clerk