

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD ON DECEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 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
Clay Reid	Commissioner
Lanier Keene	Commissioner
Alfonza Hall	Commissioner
Michael Pomirko	County Manager

Commissioner Powell called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Powell gave the invocation.

All gave the pledge.

The first item on the agenda is the Reappointment of a Board Member to the Health Board. The reappointed board member had to be notified by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, so a decision needed to be made at the current meeting. Commissioner Reid made a motion to reappoint Edwin Lee to the Health Board. Commissioner Keene seconded the motion that carried unanimously.

The next topic on the agenda is the elevator bid that the County Manager received on bid day, December 22, 2022. Because there was only one company to show up to the mandatory bid meeting prior to bid day, there was only one company eligible to bid on the elevator project. The bid from J. Glenn Gregory was well over budget. The current bid was calculated to be \$888,433.00 for the elevator construction and south porch repair. The architect on the project stated that the cost of materials has gone up, but the main factor causing the price increase is the unforeseen issues during the bid meeting. There are several structural beams, HVAC lines, and other issues that will have to be resolved during the construction. County Manager Pomirko stated that we almost have no choice in the matter. During the three week trial the County hosted recently, there was a witness that could not get to the courtroom. Without the elevator, the County is vulnerable to litigation and lawsuits. County Manager Pomirko stated that the elevator would be helpful for everyone in the County, and it is a must.

County Manager Pomirko proposed several ways to fund the project. However, County Manager Pomirko stated that he informed the architect to find ways to lower the cost. The architect is currently working to lower the price by 30-45 thousand. On the other hand, the architect also informed us there may be more unforeseen issues as construction begins.

County Manager Pomirko stated that he has searched for grants and funding to help with the costs. He contacted Representative Noel Williams, but Representative Williams informed him there was only one grant for the amount of \$50,000.00. There are other USDA loans with low interest rates if the Commissioners would rather borrow the funds.

County Manager Pomirko stated that he understands this bid was far beyond the estimated price, but he presented the Commissioners with a quote from a third-party company. The quote was composed in December of 2020, and the construction of the elevator was quoted to be \$700,000.00 by F.H. Paschen out of Atlanta. County Manager Pomirko compared the pricing, and stated that the quote from F.H. Paschen did not include the renovation and repair of the south porch.

Commissioner Reid stated that the pricing will not get any better, and the elevator is a must. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

County Manager Pomirko stated that he knows it is a lot larger than originally estimated, but the elevator is a definite need that cannot wait much longer. He also stated that the south porch may become the main entrance. Because of security, County Manager Pomirko stated that we may have to move Security Guard Hendley to the elevator entrance. He stated he would need to sit down with Officer Hendley, Sheriff Rodgers, and Judge Rhodes to speak on security.

County Manager Pomirko presented the Board with a proposal of how to fund the project. He projected using \$170,000.00 out of American Rescue Plan; \$228,814.12 out of SPLOST; \$55,000.00 out of School Infrastructure; \$125,000.00 from General Fund FY23; and \$370,039.00 out of Reserves/end of budget to equal the total cost of \$948,853.12

County Manager Pomirko stated he is not the person who likes to pull out of Reserves. He informed the Board of another option to find the \$370,039.00. The County is one or two payments away from hitting the projected numbers in SPLOST. He suggested that the County stop the payments once it fulfills the obligations, and put the extra payments towards the elevator funds. It would equal to around 11.87 payments needed to get to \$370,000. County Manager also proposed only taking half from the SPLOST and taking out the other half from Reserves.

Commissioner Keene asked where it leaves the County with building a Jail. County Manager Pomirko stated that there would be some left over funds to fix the previous designs, and then vote into SPLOST 2024.

Commissioner Keene stated that we cannot talk about a new jail until 2024 anyhow.

Commissioner Reid stated that bottom line; the elevator has to be done. It must be completed to keep the courthouse open. We cannot ignore the elevator and the accessibility issues that come with it.

County Manager Pomirko stated that the architect was confident that he could shave off \$45,000.00 from the price.

The current total of the project is \$948,853.00 including preliminary and schematics.

County Manager Pomirko states that he knows that using the payments from SPLOST will ruffle feathers but the Board must let him know what to do. Right now, SPLOST payments are 1 year and two months ahead of schedule due to inflation. County Manager Pomirko stated that he would rather not go into contingencies/reserves.

Incoming Commissioner Jamie Handley stated that it will only take one more attorney that cannot come into the courtroom because of accessibility before this issue will cost the county a lot more than the elevator will cost.

Commissioner Keene stated that other departments will need to tighten their belts and stay within budgets because it took the County 5 years to build up the emergency funds/Reserves that we have now.

County Manager Pomirko stated that he feels good with the budget, and he feels like there is some fluff. If sales tax were to go up, there is a possibility that we will not have to pull any funds.

Commissioner Keene stated that we needed to make a motion now, because the elevator is a must.

Commissioner Reid asked would this be the final cost. Can the cost go up? If we agree to the current price, will the architect still try to cut the price?

County Manager Pomirko explain that the architect will continue to try and cut the price, but the Commissioners should be prepared to find issues as construction begins.

Commissioner Reid made a motion to accept the cost of \$884,433.00 with the understanding that the County and architect will continue to cut the price.

Commissioner Keene seconded the motion that carried unanimously.

Finally, County Manager Pomirko presented the Board with a proposition from First Net Communications, provided by AT&T. First Net is a growing service provider specifically designed for first responders. The system works similarly to Tango Tango. When using the system, each department would receive one radio, placed into a box. The box would ping to radios across the county, and the ping would then go through AT&T service to a cellular device. A representative from First Net Communications met with County Manager Pomirko to discuss the options and perks of using First Net.

The representative would also like to give the Commissioners and Department Heads a presentation and demo of how the product works. County Manager Pomirko informed the Board that many other counties are using this system, such as Pulaski, Laurens, Montgomery, and Dodge.

County Manager Pomirko informed the Board that each department would use one radio, placed into a device that would control the entire department. The system would cost \$22 per line per month and a start-up cost of \$0.99 per device. The use of this system would stop the county from buying one radio tower that we could only hope would cover the entire county. Using First Net Communications, the pings can bounce off all existing towers, giving extreme range on telephone devices. It would work in the same way as two-way communications.

County Manager Pomirko stated that there was a lot of backing for the system, including counties that have started using the system with iPads to write citations. The County would not need to buy the \$110,000.00 radio tower. It would utilize existing infrastructure.

Incoming Commissioner Jamie Handley asked if there would be one radio for entire department or would each employee need their own radio and device. County Manager Pomirko informed Mr. Handley that it would require only one radio per department.

Commissioner Keene asked would Road Department Head Dowdy have a radio. County Manager Pomirko stated that he recommends Mr. Dowdy have one as well.

County Manager Pomirko stated that there would be a 10-20 thousand dollar start-up costs, but the County has already put aside \$130,000.00 for a radio tower. He informed the Board that he will set up the presentation and demo and go from there.

With no further business, Commissioner Reid made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Keene seconded the motion that carried unanimously.



Chairman, Mel Powell



County Manager, Pomirko