

## Committee of the Whole

August 11, 2015

The Committee of the Whole met Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

15 JPs Present: Easley, Shadlow, J. Harrison, Allen, K. Harrison, Adams, Jones, Sandlin, Anglin, Chiocco, Slinkard, Leadabrand, Moore, Meyers, Moehring

Others Present: County Judge Bob Clinard, Circuit Clerk Brenda DeShields, Comptroller Brenda Guenther, Human Resources Director Barbara Ludwig, Director of General Services John Sudduth, Director of Public Safety Marshal Watson, Director of Fire Services Marc Trollinger, Major Shawn Holloway

Media: Tom Sissom - Daily Record

JP Kurt Moore called the meeting to order.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

#### **1. Alta Planning & Design: Open Space Plan**

Elizabeth Bowen of Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning introduced Chuck Flink of Alta Planning & Design, who presented the "Open Space Plan", which is being funded by a Walton Family Foundation grant. He explained that the purpose of the plan is to preserve the region's green spaces during this period of tremendous growth through projects which are strictly voluntary on the part of the landowners. He said a plan will be released at the end of September, and following a public comment period, any revisions will be submitted to the Planning Commission.

#### **2. Courts Facility Discussion: Revised G-2 Plan Presented by Gary Jackson**

Gary Jackson of Hight-Jackson Architects presented a version of the G-2 plan for locating a courts facility in downtown Bentonville, noting that it has undergone several revisions since being reviewed by the Public Safety Committee last January. He said one option is for a 4-story building, and one option is for five stories. He explained that these are concept drawings, the purpose of which is to show how the concept of the building fits into the environment in relation to the existing surrounding buildings. Following a floor-by-floor review, Gary Jackson went over the cost sheet, and suggested dividing the project into phases, so that if extensive renovations to the old courthouse are needed as part of the new courts facility, the phases can all be coordinated. He noted that if they intend to use any part of the old courthouse for a functional courtroom, it will need considerably more than \$1 million in renovations, including updates to the electrical system, fire code regulations, and A.D.A. accessibility.

JP Jones noted that the additional floor may be needed by the time construction is complete, because 2020 is the target date for adding another circuit judge. Gary Jackson stated that he estimates that the difference between four and five stories is an additional \$4.5 million.

JP Moore asked how long it would be before the court could have something to present to the public, once the architects are given the go ahead.

Gary Jackson stated that from the beginning of the project to 60% completion would take at least until September of 2016.

JP Allen stated that if they want to put a question on the 2016 General Election ballot, it has to be submitted by July of 2016.

Gary Jackson stated that he would want to be sure that the numbers they present are good numbers before it goes to the public.

JP Leadabrand asked how long it would take to complete the project once construction is begun.

Gary Jackson stated that construction would take approximately two years from start to finish.

**3. Resolution Request:** Authorizing Judge James D. Bland of Oklahoma to Solemnize a Marriage in Benton County, Arkansas; Sponsor JP Slinkard

Item was withdrawn from consideration by the sponsor.

**4. Ordinance Request: Directing the disposition of firearms forfeited to the Sheriff;** Sponsor: JP Meyers

JP Meyers stated that this ordinance has been discussed at prior meetings, and the Sheriff and deputies are on board with it.

JP Meyers made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Shadlow.

A brief discussion was held concerning whether or not there an Ammunition Fund exists in the budget, as the ordinance states that the proceeds from the sale of the firearms is to be deposited there.

Comptroller Brenda Guenther stated that she would check on it prior to the Quorum Court meeting.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**5. Appropriation Request: Purchase of 60 mobile tablets for the Sheriff's Department vehicles**

Sponsor: JP Allen

JP Allen stated that this appropriation of \$233,000 would be taken out of reserves, and is needed to ensure the safety of the deputies on patrol.

JP Allen made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Adams.

JP K. Harrison noted that in the past this appropriation would have been taken out of the Communications Fund, but approximately \$500,000 was turned back to County General by the previous Sheriff's administration.

JP Shadlow questioned why this was not included in the 2015 budget. JP Moore stated that if the money had been left in the Communications Fund instead of being turned back to County General, this purchase would have been made out of it at budget time.

JP Easley questioned spending this amount of money on the Sheriff's Department after some other recent expenditures, such as the air conditioning at the jail, and perhaps this should be a budget item.

JPs Anglin, Allen, and Jones spoke in support of the request.

JP Shadlow expressed concern about the possibility of the tablets being used by deputies for personal purposes. Major Holloway explained that they would be programmed to restrict any personal use.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**6. Appropriation Request: \$7,500 JDAI Travel Grant for Juvenile Probation Department**

Sponsor: JP Allen

JP Allen made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Moehring.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**7. Appropriation Request: \$94,250 for Architect Fees for Jail Expansion Project**

Sponsor: JP Allen

JP Allen made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Jones.

JP Allen asked if there is a ballpark estimate of the total cost of the project.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated he does not expect it to go above the original estimate of \$4.8 million, and in fact it may be lower due to some changes in how they are going to construct the jail cells.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**8. Appropriation Request: \$6,776 Transfer for State Homeland Security Grant Project**

Sponsor: JP Allen

Comptroller Brenda Guenther stated that this is simply to transfer funds out of the Capital category and into Small Equipment and has no effect on the budget.

JP Allen made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Chiocco.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**9. Appropriation Request: Transfer of Funds and Create Line Item for Assessor to purchase vehicle from 9-1-1 Administration**

JP Allen made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Jones.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

**10. Appropriation Request: \$288,300 for Ambulance Services in Southeast Benton County;**

Sponsor: JP Jones

JP Jones stated that this appropriation is for purchasing the ambulance and associated equipment, which the county will have to pay for whether the decision is to contract with Mercy to provide the service, or

for the county to operate its own. He said that they need to move ahead with the licensing process, because it is tied to the ambulance, and the county will need to have its own license for either option.

JP Jones made motion to forward to the August 27, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Chiocco.

Director of Fire Services Marc Trollinger stated that they have been researching new and used ambulances, and believe that they can purchase a new one for under \$180,000, and that the rest of the appropriation will be for equipment that is required to operate the ambulance.

Marc Trollinger stated that they have been negotiating with Mercy regarding their proposal, and they have agreed to allow one of their ambulances from Carroll County to be used as a backup during the first year of operation in the event that the main ambulance has to be out of service.

JP Easley left the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

JP Moehring stated that he would not be supporting this motion, because they still do not have accurate numbers on the call volume in this area, and he does not believe they have explored all options available for covering the area, because he has talked to people who believe there are other options out there. He added that he believes there are other things that can be done to keep the costs down, and it concerns him that they are going from \$70,000 to a figure which is many times that.

JP Jones noted that the option passed from the Finance Committee without a recommendation by three votes to two.

JP Shadlow stated that she agrees with JP Moehring to a certain extent, but they cannot base their decision on the \$70,000 that the City of Springdale was charging because no one else came close to that, although she personally thinks that Mercy is ripping the county off.

She said that many members of the court do not want to go into the ambulance business, but she sees this as an opportunity to create jobs, and maybe make a little money, because someone is collecting all of these fees.

JP K. Harrison stated that even if they use volunteer fire departments and part time staff, they will still have to purchase an ambulance, which will then be county property for use in its own service, or reallocated to one of the volunteer fire departments. He said he keeps hearing that they need to wait, but he does not see what they are waiting for.

JP Allen stated that he agrees with JP K. Harrison, and that seeing all of these costs has been a learning experience – they not only were getting a great deal from the City of Springdale, but from all of the providers. He added that they have to realize that they are starting a business from scratch, while Springdale was using its existing operation and only being reimbursed for travelling a few extra miles. He added that he does not think that Mercy is ripping anyone off; their costs are not that far off from what they estimated the cost to be for a county-operated service, and he does commend them for trimming \$200,000 from their original proposal by cutting a supervisor position and providing a backup ambulance for the first year. He said this purchase could still be used to roll into other options.

JP Meyers asked about the possibility that was mentioned of using volunteers to staff the ambulance, questioning how that would work.

Marc Trollinger said that they explored the option of using off duty employees from other fire departments, and determined that the oversight required would wipe out the cost savings. He noted that they can hire six part time EMTs and paramedics for around \$300,000, but then they would need an

additional staff person to perform all of the administrative duties, because part time staff could not handle it.

JP Jones stated that at this point, no other solution has been presented to them, and if they are going to provide advanced life support, fully staffed ambulance service to this area of the county twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year as they have promised, they need to go ahead and move forward.

JP Anglin said that she liked JP Shadlow's view of this as an opportunity, and asked if first responders in the communities would still be utilized. Marc Trollinger said they would.

JP Adams spoke in support of an eventual county-operated system, but said for now he would support the Mercy option, adding that they should use the 2016-2017 calendar year to explore the option of the county doing its own. He said that they should also keep in mind that the county will be renewing contracts with all of the providers.

JP Sandlin called for the vote.

Motion passed -- 14 in favor  
1 opposed (Moehring)

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

JP Allen stated that discussion was held at the previous evening's Finance Committee regarding the timeline for getting a question on the ballot in either the March 1, 2016 Primary Election or the November 2016 General Election. He said that he had felt that the matter should be discussed by the entire court at tonight's meeting.

Following a brief discussion concerning the deadline for having a ballot question ready, JP Jones made motion to cease consideration of putting the courts facility funding question on the March 1, 2016 Primary ballot, seconded by JP Harrison.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

JP K. Harrison announced that a Legislative Committee meeting will be held Tuesday, August 25, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

JP Anglin announced that the Benton County Fair has started and will continue through Saturday, August 15.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

After motion and second, meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.