

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 18, 2020 1:30 BURDETTE COURTHOUSE**

ATTENDANCE: Chairman, Justice Michael White; Justice, Molly Jackson; Justice, Bill Nelson; Justice, Fred Fleeman; Justice, Howard Norvell; Justice, Rick Ash; Justice, Alvin Clay; Justice, Jo Ann Henton; Justice, Betty Hepler; Economic Development, Clif Chitwood, Tamika Jenkins; Circuit Clerk, Leslie Mason; Deputy Clerk, Ashley McGuirt; Assessor, Harley Bradley; Treasurer, Peggy Meatte; Finance, Kelli Jones; County Clerk, Janice Currie; Coroner, Mike Godsey; Blytheville Emergency Squad, Dewayne Seaton, Berard Beecy, Kevin Berd; Rickie Gallant, Joyce Whit, Pam Ford, Erin Bouser, Bryan Dunham, JP Elect, Tobye McClanahan; Chief Strategist, J.T. Harris; Public Affairs, Steven Savage; County Judge, John Alan Nelson.

1. Meeting was called to order by Justice, Michael White.

2. Justice White gave a review of the Courthouse renovation and the impact it will have on the Blytheville Emergency Squad. Justice White stated the County will take care of the emergency squad. Justice White stated there had been a lot of inflammatory remarks made in public and Facebook. We are not going to be inflammatory today. The process for the renovation started around 12 years ago when Judge McGuire recognized the problems in both the Blytheville and Osceola Courthouses. Judge McGuire formed the Efficiency Committee. Judge McGuire retired and Judge Carney was the next Judge. Seven and half acres was purchased across from Love's. \$150,000.00. The location was possibly going to be for the new Blytheville Courthouse. Aaron Ruby with Allison Architects came in and talked to all the Elected Officials and came up with a concept for 56,000 square foot Courthouse. The concept had 4 Courtrooms. Osceola deemed it a danger to the existence of the Osceola Courthouse. Osceola believed there was a possibility that the Osceola Courthouse could be closed and moved to the new Blytheville Courthouse. Osceola filed an injunction against the election that was going to be held. Without the support of the South end of the County the project would fail. Justice White gave Justice Norvell credit for the renovation concept. Aaron Ruby started on the new concept of the renovation. Judge, Terri Brassfield had become the Judge. The renovation project was 34,000 square feet. Judge, John Alan Nelson was elected in November. The vote for the renovation was March 2020. Judge Nelson made over 30 presentations for the renovation project. The Quorum Court also made presentations. The City Council of Blytheville was asked to pass a Resolution of Support. Osceola City Council was reluctant to pass a Resolution because of the previous conflicts. Osceola's biggest concern was how many courtrooms the renovated courthouse would have. Osceola passed the Resolution. Both City Governments were supporting the renovation. The vote was passed in March. All Circuit Judge's and Attorney's worked on the design of the Courtrooms. \$17 million was borrowed. \$2 million was promised to Osceola for their Courthouse. Over \$1 million was designated for cost over runs. The Quorum Court has not had a lot of input in the renovation. The Committee that would fit would be the Energy & Property Committee. Justice, Molly Jackson is the Chairman. The Quorum Court was aware of the move of the Emergency Squad, demolition of the Extension Office and radio tower.

3. Justice White stated the numbers given to fix the problem with the Emergency Squad were \$200,000.00 to relocate or build a new one. Nucor donated the building the Emergency Squad is in and located on County property. Justice White asked the squad if they got a new building and located where they thought relevant would that be satisfactory. Mr. Godsey stated the building would still be on County property and be the County's building. The squad wants to get away from County influence and be on our own. Justice White asked if the County could find property that was deeded to the Emergency Squad would that be acceptable. Mr. Godsey stated they would consider it. Justice White read an e mail from Justice Burge stating he believes the County should compensate the Emergency Squad \$200,000.00 and offer them title to the property on S. 61. If that location is refused then it would be the squad's responsibility to find their own location and use the funds to construct a new building. I would recommend the property committee and any other Justices to meet with Mr. Ruby on a monthly basis to keep the Quorum Court informed. My fear is if the Court does not get involved we will get to the end of the project and be over budget and have to pay the overage from County General funds. Mr. Godsey stated if the County is willing to buy the building, the squad would find a location. The squad wants to have their own land and building. Justice White asked if a lease was signed in 1999. Mr. Godsey stated he had seen a draft but now a signed one. That lease would have expired in 2005. Judge Nelson stated he believed the money could be raised privately. If the Quorum Court wants to appropriate the money he has no argument with it. Justice Jackson stated she did not believe this would be a good time to have a fund raiser. Justice Norvell agrees with Justice Jackson and stated the squad does not have time to raise \$200,000.00. Justice Norvell stated the Court needs to pay for the building. Justice Ash stated the Emergency Squad does more than rescues. They help with other functions which frees up the police department. The County should purchase the building. Justice Nelson stated the County should purchase the building from the construction fund that was set aside for contingencies. If the money is not there then the property committee should reduce some line items until the \$200,000.00 is available. Justice Hepler, Justice Henton, Justice Fleeman agree. J.T. Harris stated non-government could not occupy the Courthouse property. There has not been an answer from an attorney yet. This is from the type of bonds that were issued. Motion was made by Justice, Molly Jackson to buy the Emergency Squad building for \$200,000.00 from the construction bond money. Second was made by Justice, Bill Nelson. Motion passed and will go to Quorum Court.

4. Expenditures. End of April 33%. Elected officials are below. County Sheriff 37% because all vehicles have now been purchased. County General 33%, Road Department 27%, County landfill 25%, Senior Citizens 33%, Economic Development 30%, County Jail 30%, Blytheville Construction 27%. Revenues. \$1.3 million in County General, \$3.28 million in reserve fund, landfill CD \$1 million, County Road Fund \$1.8 million. Possible revenue impacts from COVID-19. Revenues collected in April were from February tax collections. COVID virus didn't hit us until March. Revenues received this month will reflect the beginning of the COVID virus. The biggest concern will be the road department funds, highway use tax. Could be cut 50%. We are in good shape now. Road department has spent all budgeted money on gravel. None of the asphalt money has been spent. \$200,000.00. \$5,000.00 in bridges and steel. Revenues will be down. Eddie Jones stated some of the other Counties revenues were already down. He did not think the County needs to

make any major moves at this time. Justice White asked Treasurer, Peggy Meatte if she had any thoughts. Mrs. Meatte stated County General turnback money has not been affected. County General has been affected most by not having Court to collect fines. Court is back in session. Mrs. Meatte said roads would suffer more than anybody. Revenues from the landfill have remained the same. Some accounts are slower to pay. The County will have the money for completion of the new cell. \$2 million.

5. Insurance Claims. Justice Nelson had an insurance meeting Monday, May 11. Employees are beginning to turn in claims to Financial Management office that have not been paid. The County has asked for claim numbers from Dave Nichols, Attorney for Performance Health. Kelli Jones stated she has not heard from Mr. Nichols since the meeting. Jeremy Thomas will draft a letter for the employees to send to providers or collection agencies to show the County is in a law suit. Last week with the Federal Court system the Judge was going to order us to go into arbitration. The Insurance Committee has voted to join the arbitration. Justice Nelson stated it would be months before this would take place. Justice White would like employees to start turning totals into Finance. Employees are receiving collection letters and calls. Mrs. Jones stated when she receives information from the employees she contacts Performance Health with the information. Performance Health checks the claims to see if it was filed correctly. Most of the time it is a funding problem Gerber. They are not paying. Justice White has asked if any employee had been refused treatment. Some employees have started making payments and have asked if they would be reimbursed. Jeremy Thomas said if the employees made minimum payments they would not be guaranteed they would be reimbursed.

6. Economic Development. Clif Chitwood stated at the last meeting the Quorum Court voted \$200,000.00 for workforce training. The money was put into W.O.R.K. program. This is where we pay apprentice wages. The money is not needed there. It needs to be in the generalized fund of workforce training. We will be able to pay the 25% when ANC teaches them. The companies appreciate it. Governor Hutchinson is interested in the program and will be going State wide. ANC is the leading college. Justice White asked if Mr. Chitwood was asking for a line item move. Justice Nelson stated Mr. Chitwood was asking for money to be put into the workforce training to pay a portion of the instructors salary. The State will pay a portion when particular guidelines are met. The money just needs to be moved to the right line item. Motion was made by Justice, Bill Nelson to move \$200,000.00 from the W.O.R.K. Program to workforce training. Second was made by Justice, Molly Jackson. Motion passed and will go to Quorum Court. Mr. Chitwood stated in 2016 there was an Ordinance for Nucor's first expansion. Appropriated \$1.8 million. Nucor first request was \$1,017,000.00 in 2018. Request for 2019 will be over \$1 million. Another incentive around \$500,000.00 for paint line. Mr. Chitwood stated if we move \$783,000.00 back to the original incentive package there will be enough funds to handle this year. Motion was made by Justice, Bill Nelson to restore \$783,000.00 to Nucor incentive. Second was made by Justice, Molly Jackson. Motion passed and will go to Quorum Court.

7. Mr. Chitwood has 2 Resolutions. AEDC notified Great River Medical Centers that they will be eligible for a grant of \$500,000.00 for the Blytheville facility and \$250,000.00 for the Osceola facility.

ACEDP Grants. Tamika is qualified to prepare the grants. Resolution for Grant Administrator and Resolution Authorizing Chief Elected Official to sign an application. (County Judge). Motion was made by Justice, Molly Jackson to present the Resolutions to Quorum Court. Second was made by Justice, Bill Nelson. Motion passed and will go to Quorum Court.

8. Planning & Development Meeting Thursday, May 21. 1:30 Annex building.

9. Justice White stated Justice Jackson is Chairman of Energy & Property Committee and should be overseeing the renovation project. Justice Jackson will start having monthly meetings with the County Judge or Aaron Ruby. This will keep the Court up to date on the progress being made or any changes. The project was voted on March 12 of last year. Justice Jackson received a copy of the current budget from Mr. Ruby. The budget was created by Mr. Ruby. Finance Department has nothing to do with the Courthouse budget but to pay the bills the Judge signs off on. Justice Norvell stated County employees need to be careful about what they post of Facebook. I think there needs to be a policy added to the handbook. Justice, Norvell stated we need to save as much money on the renovation as possible and Osceola could use some of the extra. Justice White handed out copies of the budget. Justice Jackson stated we are trying to get an Energy & Property meeting for the 28th of May. The committee will discuss the budget. Demolition on the old grocery slab was in the original bid. Justice Ash stated a Personnel Committee will be scheduled in the near future followed by a Fire, Police & Safety Meeting. Quorum Court meeting will be Tuesday, May 26 at the Osceola Courthouse.

10. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by: Cindy George