Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Regular Business Meeting Minutes
April 15th, 2025 - 7:00 PM
Administration Building

Present for the meeting were Vice-Chair Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. Chairman Traylor joined the meeting via Teams.

1. **Call to Order**

   Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

   Everyone said the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Invocation**

   Rev. Jimmy Lyons of East Mt. Sinai Baptist Church gave the invocation.

4. **Approval of Agenda**

   Commissioner Gilles t made a motion to amend the agenda to add the Assessment Notice, the Tax Lien for Opendoor Property Trust 1, and Charlie Peters Retirement. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. **Minutes Approval**

   Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the following three sets of minutes. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

   - Workshop Meeting – March 13th, 2025
   - Regular Business Meeting – March 18th, 2025

6. **Proclamations**

1. Lamar County Child Abuse Prevention Month -Read by Commissioner Gilles and Presented to the Division of Family Children Services Board Chairman Robert Taylor
2. Lamar County Hunger Awareness Month – Ready by Commissioner Lovett and Presented to Senior Center Director Antionette Watts and members of the Senior Center.
3. Confederate History and Heritage Month – Read by Truman Boyle and presented to William Lindsey and other members of the Barnesville Blues Sons of Confederate Veterans camp.

7. **Old Business**

   None

8. New Business

1. Ordinance 2025-03-Southern Rivers Gilles Fletcher

   Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-03-Southern Rivers located at Highway 341 South, Tax Map 063 016 rezoning request from A-R to M-1 with the following conditions. The current zoning of the Southern Rivers property located at 1367 Hwy 341 South is M1, the request for the new property is to match the zoning of the current property. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

   - Approval is for the expansion of current Southern Rivers facility and uses only;
   - No public access from Abbott Road; access is for operational needs only;
   - Development plan to include a fifty' treed buffer along Abbott Road and adjacent properties;
   - Any new entrance shall be paved for the first fifty;' and
   - Any buildings or equipment shall maintain a one hundred' setback from Hwy 341 South and maintain landscaping in accordance with existing Southern Rivers property.

2. Resolution 2025-07-Safety Coordinator -Carlette Davidson

   Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the appointment of Carlette Davidson as the Safety Coordinator. In this role, Ms. Davidson will be responsible for overseeing a safety program to assist with the county's loss prevention efforts. This appointment is a requirement of the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and the Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS). Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Resolution 2025-08: Majik Market

   Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-08 Rowland Engineering, on behalf of Samaira Properties, LLC, dba Majik Market, has applied for a variance to allow for a reduction in the required setback for underground fuel tanks from the adjoining property line from a thirty' requirement to a ten' requirement. The property is 0.77 acres, located at 919 Veterans Parkway, as shown on Tax Map 049 Parcel 52, and recorded in Deed Book 1298, Page 74-75 and Plat Book 17, Page 323. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Resolution 2025-09: Chris Butler – Special Exception Application

   Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-09, a Special Exception Application submitted by Chris Butler. The application allows Mr. Butler to prepare and sell food on his property, where he currently operates a licensed daycare and a catering kitchen, both of which are State-inspected. The application received support

from two neighbors, and Mr. Butler has agreed to limit the hours of operation to 7:00 a.m.to 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Tax Lien Issues

Matthew Murlin, owner of parcel #088-050 on Harper Road, brought to the Board's attention an issue regarding taxes owed on vacant land due to an incorrect address listed on the PT-61 form. The address was recorded as 205 instead of 2015, which led to Mr. Murlin being unaware of the taxes due. Once notified, the Tax Commissioner's Office allowed Mr. Murlin to pay half of the amount due. However, he was still charged:$59.54 and $20.00 for a Fi-Fa (tax lien). Tax Assessor Haddock explained that the error was not the fault of Mr. Murlin nor the current staff at the Tax Commissioner's Office, who are all new and still learning their roles. Tax Assessor Haddock requested the Board of Commissioners forgive the Fi-Fa charge and release the tax lien. She further requested a letter be sent to the Clerk of Superior Court, Judge Caleb Tyson. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that Mr. Murlin should still be responsible for the interest charges. There were also two additional parcels that were identified as having experienced the same issue: Stephanie Crawford, 183 Midway Road, parcel #039-043 and Opendoor Property Trust 1, parcel #086-033.

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to waive the Fi-Fa charges for all three parcels. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#088-050 (Murlin)

#039-043 (Crawford)

#086-033 (Opendoor Property Trust 1)

6. Budget Amendment: Operating Contingency Fund

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #1 in the amount of $94,412. Vice-Chair Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The amendment provides funding for two new positions:

- A Fire Inspector for the Fire Department
- A Code Enforcement Officer for Planning & Community Development

The total expenditure includes costs for salaries, FICA, Medicare, communications, and uniforms. Funding for this amendment will be drawn from Administration Contingencies.

7. Surplus Vehicles – Sheriff's Office

County Clerk Davidson addressed the Board of Commissioners to request approval to surplus a list of county vehicles. She explained that the vehicles in question are old, worn out, and no longer listed on the county's schedule of liability. Approval from the Board is required to formally declare these vehicles as surplus property.

8954 1999 Ford F-250

5655 2001 Chev Tahoe

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to surplus Vehicle Identification # 8954 and #5655. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Assessment Notices and HB581/HB92 Discussion

Tax Assessor Haddock addressed the Board regarding the structure and contents of the tax assessment notice, focusing on three key sections and the impact of recent legislative changes. With the passing of HB581, all local government authorities were initially required to provide an estimated rollback rate on assessment notices. However, HB92 revised this requirement, allowing local governments to choose between providing the estimated rollback rate, or providing estimated taxes, as traditionally shown. If the county opts to include the estimated rollback millage rate, it must be certified to the Tax Assessors and County Tax Commissioner at least 15 days before the postmark of the annual notice of assessment. This rate must be approved by formal vote of the elected governing body. There is no formal guidance on how the rollback rate must be calculated. If the Board later adopts a higher millage rate than the estimated rollback rate, the tax bill must include a disclaimer indicating the governing authority exceeded the estimate and that this will result in higher taxes owed.

Tax Assessor Haddock recommended showing estimated taxes on the assessment notice, as the Board of Education also plans to do so. She explained that including both estimated rollback rate and estimated taxes on the notice could be confusing for taxpayers. One example was if a property increases from $100,000 in 2024 to $150,000 in 2025, and the County opts into HB581 while the Board of Education does not, the net taxable values and formats would differ, adding further confusion.

Chairman Traylor noted that calculating an estimated rollback rate would require consideration of the current budget and reassessment growth, which are subject to change.

Tax Assessor Haddock formally recommended continuing with showing estimated taxes only Commissioner Gilles made a motion to retain the current format and show estimated taxes, not estimated rollback rate. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Retirement Recognition

Chairman Traylor reported that he recently attended a retirement event for an employee of Vulcan who retired after 40 years of service with the Monroe County Fire Department. He emphasized the importance of recognizing employees who have dedicated many years to serving their communities.

County Administrator Townsend recognized Charlie Peters for his service to Lamar County. Mr. Peters was presented with a plaque and a dinner, in accordance with the Lamar County Code Book. Mr. Peters served the Public Works Department, including Animal Control and Signs, for a total of 15 years and six months. Chairman Traylor and the Board expressed appreciation for Mr. Peters' commitment and years of service to the county.

9. Administrator's Report

County Administrator Townsend gave the April Report.

Revenue Update for March 31, 2025

General Fund: $673,116.91

Total Fiscal Activity: $2, 011,268.91

Expenditures: $1,610,982.61

Total Expenditures: $3,710,713.29

Cash Flow Update:

Currently off due to the auditors not booking the LMIG money into March.

Grant Total of General Fund: $4,078,938.55

Special Revenue Funds**:** $28,266.58

Capital Project Funds: $2,897,599.12

Debt Service:$3,395,656.23

Grand Total of Governmental Funds: $10,400,460.48

Projects:

Animal Shelter Close Out-Granding Opening

GDOT Project – Hwy 41 & Hwy 36 the signal arm has been ordered for the red light.

RFP for the R-cut and Atlanta Street curve modifications and culvert design. Waiting on EXP to work out those details.

Chappell Mill Road and Rock Springs Project

Highway 36 – R-cut and traffic light projects

Collection Disbursements

Local Option Sales Tax (LOST): $ 147,042.24
Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST): $258,618.26
Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST): $250,243.67

AmeriPro Health Transports
Request: 339 Transport: 193 Refusal: 120 Cancellation: 26 Response Time: 6:57
Mutual Aid with Upson County: fifteen

GDOT and Hwy 18

Working to get a reduce speed from Hwy 18 to Hwy 41. Speed study should start by the end of April or first of May.

Interim Tax Commissioner

County Administrator Townsend congratulated and thanked Lesley Kilchriss on being named Interim Tax Commissioner. He noted that he has worked with her over the past ten years and recognized her as a vital part of the team, supporting both himself and County Clerk Davidson, among others. He expressed his appreciation for her contributions and wished for her success in her new role, adding that his door is always open.

County Administrator Townsend extended his gratitude to former Tax Commissioner Amanda Gamez, recognizing her many years of dedicated service to the Tax Commissioner's Office, where she began working at the age of eighteen. Amanda stepped down due to an ongoing illness and is now the Deputy Tax Commissioner. He thanked her for her commitment and contributions to the county and expressed his heartfelt prayers.

Chairman Traylor led everyone in a moment of silence for Amanda Gamez.

10. **Public Comment**

Diane Perry: Thanked Commissioner Lovett for having the Senior Center issues resolved; dishwasher, triple sink, and ground maintenance. Shared upcoming community events: the Annual book sale is April 26th, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; Keep Barnesville Beautiful, May 3rd, 2025 9:00 -2:00 p.m.; First Farmers Market, May 3rd in the parking lot next to the Barnesville-Lamar County Library; Republican Pary of Lamar County, May 6th, a Forum discussing the 2025 Legislative Session at the EP Roberts Center featuring Senator Marty Harbin, House Rep Beth Camp and House Rep Robert Dickey.

James Hyde Reported that he contacted his Commissioner several weeks ago and learned the Board of Commissioners had no intention of filing a protest regarding the December SWA Board meeting, which he stated was held in violation of the Georgia Open Meetings Act. He noted the legal window to file a protest is 90 days, and it was around day eighty-five when he reached out. Emphasized that this issue is unrelated to current federal lawsuits and instead concerns protecting the citizens of the County. Criticized the SWA Board for attempting to seat a sixth member from the City of Milner, which he believes would give an unfair advantage and create bias against County-appointed members. Described the failure to challenge the meeting as "unconscionable" and pointed to this as further evidence of the ineffectiveness of the Conflict Counsel, who he said has charged over $30,000 to answer one simple question. Asserted that the Conflict Counsel was allegedly given a long-term contract without it being proposed, discussed, motioned, or passed, and that no one had the authority to offer such a contract. Stated that no answer has been provided by the attorney regarding the legality of votes taken by Commissioners Ryran Traylor and Nancy Thrash while receiving compensation from the SWA, which Mr. Hyde claims would make their actions illegal and non-binding. So, tens of thousands of dollars later, he said they still had no answer from the Conflict Council.

Because this attorney has failed to provide you with a timely, legally sound answer to one simple question, they have gotten into needless litigation from the Federal Government. All the while the SWA has continued to carry on with no accountability and it will take a year to resolve this through the courts, which was and is exactly their plan.

Demanded that attorney Amy Cowan provide a written legal opinion on the matter, specifically whether votes by Traylor and Thrash were legal, and appear at the next Regular Meeting to read that opinion aloud for the record. They of course know the answer that the moment any Commissioner, past or present, took any form of compensation from the SWA, they were and are immediately barred from taking any official action as a Commissioner.

Mr. Hyde said maybe not hearing it from the Council somehow makes a difference, but it does not, the action that Ryran Traylor and Nancy Thrash took were illegal. They were non-binding and not having that answer in a timely fashion is a direct result of why they are here today, and the Conflict Council needs to answer to that.

Donald Hartman: Reported an issue where he reached out to his Commissioner, Truman Boyle, and Planning and Community Development Director Anita Buice. He encouraged citizens to contact their Commissioner or County Departments with concerns, noting that they listen, work with you, and provide feedback. He noted seeing social media posts about the Animal Shelter opening, and shared that many people are happy about it. He expressed that he is glad it is now open. Mr. Hartman mentioned that although he is not a ham radio operator, he monitors the airwaves. During recent storms, he listened to deputies coordinating with chainsaws to clear roads, and he extended his thanks to them for their efforts.

11. Round Table

Commissioner Lovett: Thanked Mrs. Perry for her kind remarks about the Senior Center, noting that credit for its success belongs to County Administrator Townsend. Expressed appreciation to everyone who attended the grand opening of the new Lamar County Animal Shelter. Thanked County Administrator Townsend for doing a tremendous job. Announced the upcoming “Tired of Tires” recycling event, made possible by a BRACE Grant awarded to Lamar County. The event will take place at the Public Works Facility on Grove Street: April 25 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., April 26 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., April 27 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Gilles: Thanked everyone for the strong turnout at the Lamar County Animal Shelter grand opening. Encouraged community members to volunteer by visiting the Animal Shelter and signing up.

Chairman Traylor: Stated that the Animal Shelter project had been in the works for 10 years, and at times it seemed it would not come to fruition due to multiple votes and split decisions. Reported that the grand opening was a great event with an incredible turnout. Expressed pride in County Administrator Townsend, Public Works Director Rigdon, and Animal Shelter Director Tyler White for their dedication and hard work on the project.

Gave special thanks to Tom Wellner and shared reflections of regularly having lunch with Fred Morris over the course of a year to discuss the Animal Shelter. Shared that Mr. Morris told him during the final week of his life that he had done all he could and entrusted Mr. Wellner to see the project through. Noted that despite being $150,000.00 short of the needed funding, Mr. Wellner assured them they would succeed and ultimately raised even more than the target to complete the shelter. Chairman Traylor led the room in giving Mr. Wellner a round of applause.

Commissioner Gilles expressed thanks for bringing the television for the video presentation of Fred Morris and his thoughts on the animal shelter prior to his death. Chairman Traylor stated his niece works with the University of Georgia's athletics and upon return from Seattle and getting ready for Game Day (G-Day) on Saturday she stayed up until 2:30 a.m. getting a video ready that he and his wife had recorded the last day of his life for the grand opening of the Lamar County Animal Shelter.

Chairman Traylor reported that the Sheriff's Office is hosting their annual golf tournament on April 16th, 2025. Sheriff White reported that the teams were full.

Chairman Traylor stated that while the Board generally does not respond to public comments during meetings, they will provide clarification when there are inaccuracies that need to be addressed. Chairman Traylor reported that Attorney Amy Cowan had not been given an extended contract and that the original contract remains in place.

Chairman Traylor reported that a presentation from Carl Vinson Institute of Government showed that the literacy rate in Lamar County is very low. The Friends of the Library have been sending books to those houses in Lamar County where the literacy rate is low, and they are finding out that the parents cannot read. Chairman Traylor encouraged everyone to do anything they can to help improve the literacy in the community. The membership to join the Friends of the Library is $20.00. Mrs. Perry stated that all of the money for membership goes back to the library for purchasing books, material, and equipment.

12. Executive Session

None

13. Adjournment

Vice-Chair Fletcher made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business Meeting at approximately 8:16 p.m. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Lamar County Board of Commissioners

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Ryran Traylor, Chairman

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Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chair

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

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Truman Boyle, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk