



The McDuffie County Board of Commissioners held a Special Called Commission Meeting
Tuesday Evening, August 24, 2021, 6:00 pm
Government Center Meeting Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Charles Newton, IV, Chairman
Gloria Thompson, Commissioner
Bill Jopling, Commissioner
Frederick Favors, Commissioner
Sammie Wilson, Vice Chairman

COUNTY REPRESENTATION:

David Crawley, County Manager
Nikki Milburn, County Clerk
Pam Workman, Finance Director
Stephen Sewell, Fire/EMS

MEDIA: Erin Burditt, McDuffie Progress

Others: 15

Public Hearing

1. 1st Reading: Ordinance 21-04; Fire Fee

David presented Ordinance 21-04; Fire Fee and also Resolution 21-08; Fire Protection Rates to the Board for the first reading. He advised that the proposed fire fee will be managed in the future by the Public Safety Committee which consist of members from Board of Commissioners and City Council. Chairman Newton advised that the board as discussed going with the rollback for millage, so with the addition of this fee, most property owners won't see much of a difference. Commissioner Jopling stated that he thinks this is a good compromise for everyone. Chairman Newton advised that Mrs. Peggy Lovejoy signed up to speak during the public hearing portion and allowed her to address the board. Ms. Lovejoy asked the board that with the consolidation of the fire departments in recent years, what happened to the savings that everyone was told would happen? And she also asked, why wasn't the meeting advertised in the newspaper? Chairman Newton asked Nikki to address meeting notice procedure. Nikki advised that newspaper and radio are sent notice of all meetings along with the agenda being posted on the meeting board in the atrium of the building and on the county website. Chairman Newton advised that fire service is costly and in order to provide quality service you have to have quality equipment and man power. In order to keep up with the demands of service and fee is needed in order to fund those services.

Chairman Newton asked if there were any further public hearing items at this time, hearing no response the public hearing portion of the meeting was closed.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Newton called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm, acknowledged a quorum of commissioners present and welcomed everyone in attendance.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chairman Wilson offered the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVALS

Agenda (Current)

Chairman Newton asked if there were any corrections to the current agenda.

Vice Chairman Wilson made the motion to approve the current agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thompson and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration to Approve Broadband Grant.

David advised that as everyone is aware, the board has been working for months to provide broadband services to the unserved and underserved areas of McDuffie County. The county received \$2,069,903 in American Rescue Plan funding, which can be allocated to broadband infrastructure. Earlier this month the Governor's Office of Planning Budget outlined a grant process for the distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds in the amount of \$2.4 billion. David advised that from his understanding that \$300 million of the State Fiscal Recovery Funds will be allocated toward broadband infrastructure and must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. The application process and distribution of funds for broadband must adhere to the interim policies outlined for the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative. Procedures include requiring local government to be designated as a Broadband Ready Community, local governments must partner with a certified provider, local governments must make the application, and local governments are encouraged and the applications are graded based on local participation. David advised that earlier this week he has met with several certified providers including Comcast, Relyant Communications, and AT&T. Comcast provided the most cost-effective and feasible plan to provide service to 2,305 homes and business that do not have broadband service today, representing 80% of the unserved units. Chairman Newton advised that he would like to see the \$7 million total to cover all the homes and businesses in the community. He stated that he feels like this is a great opportunity to get the broadband so desperately needed in our area. The school has indicated that they are also on board with this plan and would provide a percentage of funding as well.

Commissioner Thompson made the motion to approve spending not more than \$5 million for the Broadband Expansion Grant that will include funding sources from the local school system, SPLOST (Broadband Infrastructure), American Rescue Plan and Comcast. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Wilson and passed unanimously.

2. Discussion Concerning Application for State Fiscal Recovery Funds for the Wrightsboro Road Sewer Project.

David advised that the board has been working to address the issues in the Wrightsboro Road with the failing septic systems. Earlier this month the Governor's Office of Planning Budget outlined a grant process for the distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds in the amount of \$2.4 billion. Applications for funding must be received by August 31st. David advised that it's his understanding that \$250 million of the State Fiscal Recovery Funds will be allocated toward water and sewer and must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. Local governments are encouraged and the applications are graded based on local participation. The county has been working with Precision Planning to get an updated project cost that would include all 3 phases of the proposed Wrightsboro Road Sewer Expansion. The revised total cost for all three phases of the sewer improvement is \$4,087,550.00. Funding sources for this total project is proposed from CDBG, GEFA Loan, Renewals and Extensions and State Fiscal Recovery Funds/American Rescue Plan. The Board agreed for David to move ahead in the application process.

*Ms. Lovejoy asked to address the Board again before the meeting closed. Chairman Newton advised that its not normal practice be he would allow a quick comment or question. Ms. Lovejoy stated that

she was told by Wayne Parham with the newspaper the reason this meeting was not advertised in the paper was because they were not notified until Friday. Chairman Newton advised Ms. Lovejoy that she has been on enough committees for the county to know what the rules are for meeting notifications and we were within proper protocol. He advised her that he is disappointed that the board just sat in the meeting and approved millions to be spent getting broadband services for the entire county and she has nothing but negative comments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Wilson to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:35 pm, seconded by Commissioner Jopling and passed unanimously.

MCDUFFIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Charles G. Newton, IV, Chairman

ATTEST:



Nikki Milburn, County Clerk