

JASPER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Work Session

Monday, November 25, 2024

Chairman Bruce Henry called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bruce Henry, Chairman; Steven Ledford, Vice Chair; Don Jernigan; Sheila Pounds and Asher Gray

Staff: Mike Benton, County Manager, Sheila Jefferson, Clerk- Administrative Services Director, Larissa Ruark, Chief Accounting Officer and Doug Attaway Planning and Zoning Director.

County Manager Mike Benton opened the meeting by reviewing the current county retirement plan and the new options put together by the retirement committee. Mr. Benton said Mr. David Bell from ACCG was in attendance and he could help answer questions. Mr. Benton went over the improvements recommended by the committee. He said that the committee recommended 5% because it was believed that they would need to increase the employee contribution to make the plan more affordable. Mr. Benton said it is recommended that the employers put in 6.7% but are only required to contribute 5.9%. Chairman Henry asked why the county contribution isn't 6.7% if that is the recommended amount. Mr. Benton said that part of the reason is because the audit shows 6% as a strong contribution. Mr. Bell said that the county's contribution is on the lower end. He said most employers contribute 11-14%. Mr. Benton said according to the ACCG Auditor the county retirement plan is in good shape so the county has stayed with the 6%. He said if the Commissioners keep the employee contribution at 3% and change the retirement plan to option 1A the county contribution would increase to 9.5% and option 1B would increase the county contribution to 12.3%. Mr. Benton said that county contribution would still be low compared to other counties with option 1A. He gave information for surrounding counties saying they are the competition for getting and keeping employees.

Mr. Benton said the requested ROTH plan is available to employees it was just not adopted by the previous County Commissioners. Mr. Bell said it is fairly simple with no cost to the county because it is an optional plan offered to employees. He said they would need a resolution and an amendment signed by the Commissioners with the effective date. Chairman Henry asked if the resolution and amendment could be ready by the December 2nd meeting. Mr. Bell said he would do his best. Mr. Benton said ACCG has over a hundred retirement options if the commissioners want to look at other options. Mr. Benton said they must decide on the amount of improvement, the multiplier, and if they will choose a defined benefits or defined contribution package. Commissioner Jernigan asked if they could offer both. Mr. Bell said it can be done but it is an administrative nightmare.

Commissioner Gray said he thinks the county needs to choose option 1B because it rewards employees for time served. Mr. Benton said there is an additional cost to the county to add unreduced early retirement and an increased multiplier. Chairman Henry said they need to do away with some options saying 2A and 2B need to go away. Commissioner Gray said it seems no one is interested in the 401K plan so 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B can be removed as well. Mr. Benton said the 457B would still be available to anyone who wanted to participate and would be improved to offer a ROTH option. Mr. Benton said they are now down to 1A and 1B so he will prepare the requested numbers and information for presentation at the December 2, meeting.

Sheriff Donnie Pope asked to speak regarding the employee retirement. He said he wants the Commissioners to know that the county employees showed up for this meeting not to intimidate the Commissioners but because this is important to them. He said county employees are part of a team and they are the greatest resource the county has. He said they should invest in the employees to retain good employees. He said he is encouraged, and he wanted to let the Commissioners know he appreciates the work they have done on employee retirement. He said he has been pushing for four long years. He said he appreciates their time and what they are doing.

Chairman Henry moved to a discussion of curbside trash pickup and other options. Mr. Benton said the current contract with Waste Management ends June 30th 2025 and the current cost is \$205.33. He said typically if they want to continue the curbside pickup they would need to start in January or February getting bids together and advertising. He said that would allow them to award the bid between February and March. Mr. Benton said Commissioner Ledford mentioned other options and needed some clarity and direction on the other options he has in mind. Commissioner Ledford said he would like to get the cost to open five convenient centers. He said he would like one per district. Commissioner Gray said if the county is going to have convenient centers they need to offer what other counties have and allow appliances, tires, and anything that residents need to dump. Commissioner Jernigan said he doesn't have a truck so that would mean he has to put his garbage in his car and haul it away. Commissioner Ledford said he could do that or contract his trash service. Mr. Benton said there is a big difference between full-service convenience centers and household trash-only convenience centers. He said it would cost more and they would need enough land for each location. Commissioner Jernigan asked if the county owns land in all five districts or needs to purchase property to open convenient centers. Mr. Benton said he asked the Tax Assessor and she is checking. Commissioner Ledford said they would need to be open five days a week with an employee operating each location and Code Enforcement would have to ensure trash was not just dumped out everywhere when the gates were closed. Chairman Henry said they would have to install 24-hour surveillance cameras and they would need to be able to pick up car tags. Mr. Benton asked if it would be commercial or only residential. Commissioner Ledford said he would just go with residential. Mr. Benton said he did check with Putnam County and they have eight with some full service and some household trash only. Mr. Benton said he will get information together but they will also have to gather bids for curbside as well. Commissioner Gray asked if the landfill would be used as a service center. Mr. Benton said they should. Commissioner Gray said that leaves four locations to figure out. Commissioner Ledford said at one time the county owned land on Jackson Lake Rd and had dumpsters located just passed Larry's four-way. Mr. Benton said he would get the information together.

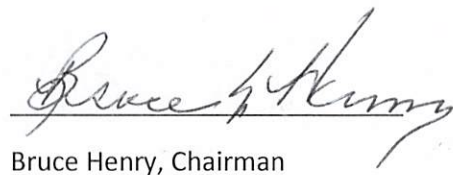
Mr. Benton started a discussion for the 2026 Budget saying they are looking at a radical change in the way the budget process is done. He said one way is zero-based budgeting meaning everything would need to be presented and defined. He asked if this process would include each position in each department. Chairman Henry said he isn't sure how it works but he would think payroll would remain the same and he doesn't think the insurance would need to be changed. Chairman Henry asked Commissioner Gray what he was looking for when he requested to do the zero-based budgeting. Commissioner Gray said he was talking about looking at what is needed and what is not needed. Commissioner Ledford said they need to look at things like vehicles that the county isn't using but still pay insurance on. Chief Finch said the county cannot legally drop the insurance on a vehicle they own he said they would have to get rid of the vehicle to remove the insurance. Mr. Benton said the county fully embraces the idea of getting rid of unused vehicles. Commissioner Ledford said it is time for another surplus sale. Chairman Henry

recommended checking with other insurance companies for a better rate. Chief Accounting Officer Larissa Ruark asked if there was a benchmark or threshold on how much to justify on each line item asking on a fourteen-million-dollar budget how extreme are they trying to be. She said she is thinking in terms of time restraints, resources, staffing, and trying to make it all by the deadline. Commissioner Ledford said one example is when the previous 911 director had \$15,000 in her budget for toilet paper. He said things that stand out in a budget that cause you to question it. Commissioner Gray said he is thinking of software programs the county pays for but isn't using, He said to think of it in the same terms you would your home budget if you were looking to cut expenses. Commissioner Ledford said if the millage rate would need to be increased he would feel better about that knowing they tried everything including this new process with the budget to ensure what the county spends is necessary.

Mr. Benton gave an update on the county landfill saying that every year Jordan Engineering must perform a survey on the remaining capacity of the landfill. He said the EPD has a lot of requirements on pre-funding, pre-closing, and post-closing a landfill. He said in 2019 the estimated date for completion of the facility meaning when the landfill would be full was set for 2040. Mr. Benton said now at the current rate that has changed to 2043. He said the expected closure was 2031 in 2022 and 2033 in 2021. He said some factors are in that change such as the increased cost and cutting the number of days the landfill is opened. Commissioner Ledford asked how much it would cost annually if it was closed down. Mr. Benton said it is very close to what it is now or possibly more. Chairman Henry said someone contacted him and asked if the county would close the landfill and allow them to run it as a transfer station. He said they would allow people to dump but nothing would go into the landfill. Commissioner Ledford asked if they are willing to pay the county to cover the cost of having to landfill. Chairman Henry said they probably would and they are local to Jasper County. Commissioner Ledford said it was worth looking into whether it would stop the landfill from filling up and not cost the county anything. Commissioner Gray asked if it would be a lease deal. Chairman Henry said he didn't have all the details, but he could ask for a business plan and present it if the Commissioners were interested. Chairman Henry said he would have them present a business plan.

Mr. Benton gave an update on Station 7 saying the county challenged Precision Planning's proposal cost for providing architectural services. The state of Georgia Probation Group now requires plans to be stamped by an architect before to will build. He said the cost from Precision Planning was \$65,000. He said he sent it to the normal representative and she priced it at \$43,000. He said the Chairman said that still seemed high and Liz at Precision Planning said they may want to try to find someone cheaper. Commissioner Ledford said it wouldn't hurt to reach out to a few other firms. Mr. Benton said they would bid it out.

The work session was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.



Bruce Henry, Chairman



Sheila Jefferson, Clerk