



power, telephone, or cell phone for 24 hours, and his only method of communication was the radio in his truck. He said that he contacted CenCom periodically to check in, and was satisfied that the system worked the way it was supposed to work.

Judge Bisbee recognized Marshall Watson, D.E.M. Coordinator. Marshall Watson gave a situation report for the county and provided maps showing approximate storm damage by severity throughout Benton County. Marshall Watson stated he could not say enough about the forecast center out of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who alerted them as early as a week ahead of the storm of the possibility of its severity, allowing them to get information to the public safety community as early as Thursday, January 29. Marshall Watson reported that at one time there were eight shelters open, housing over 300 people. He said that communication with the cities has been excellent, and the cooperation between cities and the county road department was exceptional as well. He said he could not say enough about all of the volunteer agencies involved. He reported that six generators have been ordered for water and sewer facilities thru FEMA, which will be returned to the federal government when the situation is back to normal.

Marshall Watson reported that they toured the county with FEMA today, in hopes of convincing them that Benton County will reach the \$503,000 threshold to qualify for a presidential disaster declaration, which will enable an 87% reimbursement from FEMA. He said the state's total damage estimate must reach \$3.5 million to qualify for a presidential declaration. He said that the municipalities and Benton County have already expended \$1 million, and Carroll Electric has spent over \$2 million, so he anticipates that the threshold will be reached. He added that the county would receive 87% of any costs incurred above regular salaries, including contracting debris removal.

Marshall Watson stated that at this time Benton County has four debris collection sites established, and that FEMA estimated 340 cubic yards of debris per mile, or approximately 400,000 cubic yards of debris in the unincorporated areas of the county. He said that they are currently working with FEMA to hopefully establish some of the sites as burn sites, but some of them will probably be chipping sites as well. He said that they have estimated that the cleanup will cost between \$2 to \$4 million dollars, with an additional \$500,000 for infrastructure repairs.

JP Winscott asked when they could expect to hear from FEMA. Marshall Watson replied that they should hear within a week or two.

Judge Bisbee stated that the volunteer fire departments will also be receiving reimbursement, and commended those from the east side of the county for aiding the departments on the west side in clearing the debris. County Judge Bisbee stated Benton County's damage alone will reach the qualification for the entire state. He stated that he also wanted to brag on the Road Department crews for working 24 hours a day during the worst of the storm, and reported that 100% of the county roads are now passable.

He said they are looking at a potential \$4 million cleanup bill, and he would like to see that money spent entirely in Benton County, rather than with companies from outside the state.

He said that FEMA does require bids, although their requirements are not as strict as the state's. He said that if they use the road crews to do the cleanup, they will still be cleaning up in July, and will not have touched a single road project. He said that he would like to contract the debris removal, with the county monitoring the disposal sites as far as burning and burying. He said that he would also like the county to perform the road re-building,

because they are equipped to do it, and have to be out on the roads anyway.

Judge Bisbee stated that he would like to start taking bids tomorrow with local contractors, and is requesting an ordinance transferring \$2 million from the reserves to the County Road Fund in order to start the cleanup process.

JP Stephenson asked if they are only cleaning up county property. Judge Bisbee stated that is correct, and they are going to get the information out that if residents can get the debris to the county right-of-way, the county will pick it up.

JP Sandlin asked if the request is for \$2 million to get started, with more money likely to be needed later. County Judge Bisbee stated that Richard McComas could answer that question, but they now have about \$3.5 million in reserve, which is a pretty small reserve for a \$38 million budget. Richard McComas stated that by the time these monies are spent we will have heard back from FEMA, and noted that they reimbursed \$800,000 for last year's cleanup. Judge Bisbee stated that they could also take money from the Capital account if they need to, but even if FEMA says no, they still have to do this cleanup. He stated that funds could be taken from the reserve account and then moved back when payment from FEMA is received.

JP Hubbard stated that clean up from the last disaster had been taken care of with county road funds, and that a fund needed to be set up so that there would be funds for disasters such as this. Judge Bisbee stated that he did not know anything about the 2009 budget, but there will likely be disaster fund in the 2010 budget. Richard McComas stated the County Judge has \$20,000 in an Emergency Fund, and D.E.M has \$25,000. Judge Bisbee stated that in last year's disaster, the county received a cleanup bid for \$400,000, chose to do it themselves, and it ended up costing \$800,000, and he hopes to do better than that. Marshal Watson stated that the problem experienced last year was due to the type of equipment that was required, namely large industrial type dump trucks to pick up large logs.

JP Stephenson stated that last year, the Quorum Court refused to go along with paying the contract work. He added that they have not had an emergency contingency fund in the past, but hopefully the makeup of the new Quorum Court will feel differently, because he does not think that is correct. Judge Bisbee stated that his feeling on that is that they should have a single reserve because they never know what they will be facing. He said they currently have \$3.5 million, which he does not feel is large enough.

JP Allen asked if only the Road Department will be facing extra costs, or would the Sheriff's Department and CenCom also need additional funds. Judge Bisbee said those departments will receive separate checks, and the Road Department is dealing strictly with debris removal. JP Blaty asked Judge Bisbee if he would be sharing with the court his decision process in choosing which estimate he will accept. Judge Bisbee said he has an open door policy, and an open information policy, and he would be happy to call another meeting if they would like, although it would be getting into the operation of the County Judge's office.

JP Moore stated that he would rather operate out of Fund 440, because spring is typically a time of low tax collection and cash flow, and they have no immediate obligations on that account. He said he felt it would be safer to draw from that fund, so as not to impact the county's cash flow as far as payroll or things of that nature. Richard McComas stated that the county's cash flow is such that they can take the money out of reserves right now, because property taxes were received at the end of the year, and they would not have to

bother Capital Projects. JP Moore asked how long they expect the \$2 million to last before they have to come back and ask for more. Judge Bisbee stated that he just wants to be sure that he has enough money to legitimately do business with the companies that will be bidding on this work. He said that as a practical matter, he would like to take it out of reserves, because that does not jeopardize any of his agencies or departments. He said that the Capital Projects fund is locked up, and he would rather keep the money there; if it gets tight for his departments, they will tighten their belts.

JP Sandlin noted that state law requires 10% to be kept in reserve for emergencies, and this would seem to qualify as an emergency. Judge Bisbee stated that no one is sure if that money can be used or not, because it has never been done. He said that they should understand that if that money is used, they are taking the first \$4 million from next year's budget.

JP Moore made motion to draft an ordinance for the appropriation of \$2 million dollars to be transferred to the County Road Fund, 020, Account 5738, Miscellaneous Services, seconded by JP Sandlin.

Judge Bisbee requested that they note that this has been through the Committee of Thirteen, so it can go directly to the Quorum Court. JP Allen stated that procedurally he thought they should recess into a Committee of Thirteen meeting. JP Moore withdrew his motion to draft an ordinance, second was duly withdrawn.

JP Stephenson made motion to recess the Quorum Court meeting and go into a Committee of Thirteen meeting, seconded by JP Sandlin.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Quorum Court recessed.

County Judge Dave Bisbee called the special Quorum Court meeting back to order. JP Moore stated that they could not proceed with approval of the ordinance because they do not have one prepared to vote on. Judge Bisbee asked for consent from the Quorum Court to go ahead and begin letting contracts. JP Moore stated that they need a resolution stating the intention of the Quorum Court to approve the transfer of funds for the stated purpose. JP Moore made motion for a resolution of same, seconded by JP Sandlin.

There being no further discussion, a roll call vote was recorded as follows:

10 yeas: Wozniak, Sandlin, Hubbard, Moore, Allen, Douglas,  
Blaty, Winscott, Harrison, Stephenson

3 absent: Wolf, Brown, Lewis

Resolution passed.

JP Moore asked Richard McComas if the draft ordinance could be prepared by the

February 5, 2009 Finance Committee meeting. Richard McComas stated that it would.

Judge Bisbee again commended Marshall Watson and the other county employees, stating that they really rose to the occasion and he is very proud of them.

After motion and second, meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tena O'Brien  
County Clerk

Prepared by: Janet Reaves