

July 7, 2011

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

A Transportation Committee meeting was held on Thursday, July 7, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. in the County Administration Building, Quorum Court Meeting Room, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Douglas, Hawkins, Curry, King, Blaty

Others Present: JPs Winscott, Sandlin and Moore, County Judge Bob Clinard, Administrator of Public Service Gary Black, Administrator of General Services Elizabeth Bowen, Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson, Comptroller Richard McComas, Fleet Manager Dennis Greenlee

Media: Tom Sissom - Daily Record, Kyle Hill - KURM Radio

JP Douglas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1) Discussion: Subdivision Roads

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he has received complaints from residents near Lowell about roads being changed from county roads to private roads, and that he is reviewing the county's Road Maintenance Department's responsibilities. He stated that county roads are generally designated by sign color; green signs indicating regular maintenance, blue signs indicating county roads that will be graded twice a year, and white signs indicating private roads. He stated that over time, inadequate record-keeping of the system of using signs to label roads has become jumbled. He stated we have county roads with blue signs that are asphalt, and that blue sign roads are supposed to be graded two times a year, but how do you grade an asphalt road? Judge Clinard stated that he plans to review ordinances and to develop a policy on accepting roads within new subdivisions. He added that the ordinance is so vague; they need to redefine the terms and what it means to maintain these roads, because currently there is no policy in the county to handle subdivision roads.

JP Douglas stated that the Planning Board has to be involved in determining whether roads in new subdivisions are taken as county roads while the project is in the planning stage, and who is going to maintain these roads should be discussed at that level. He stated that for existing roads, the county must provide maintenance on roads that have been designated as county roads, and if the county has maintained the roads in the past, then the county has an obligation to continue.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that the County Judge has the responsibility to set the level of maintenance on county roads, and the Road Department decides on how much maintenance.

JP Hawkins stated that in setting priorities, the county has to consider how much money is available for road work, safety issues, and the volume of traffic on the roads.

JP Winscott recognized Cheryl Murphy of Rogers, who stated that the state statute is against prioritizing roads, and that Benton County has agreed to maintain the roads and cannot renege on its responsibilities.

Administrator of Public Service Gary Black stated that road problems started in 1836 and did not arise overnight, and applauded the County Judge for doing the right thing.

2. Discussion: Car Pool

Administrator of General Services Elizabeth Bowen stated that two vehicles were placed in the car pool five months ago, (a 2005 Ford Explorer and a 2007 Dodge pickup) and it has been determined that an additional vehicle is needed. Elizabeth Bowen asked that the Transportation Committee forward an appropriation request for the purchase of an additional vehicle for the car pool to the August 2, 2011 Finance Committee. She added that it would be an economy car bought with a state contract.

JP Winscott stated that he liked the idea of a car pool and the idea of sharing, but his real concern is who will be responsible for the vehicle. Elizabeth Bowen stated that there is a written policy for checking out the vehicles, and that County Properties Coordinator Marsha Graham is responsible for the checking out and in of the vehicles, and for making sure that the vehicles are maintained.

JP Sandlin asked if there is a problem in regards to commissioned funds verses non-commissioned, and if these would be General Fund vehicles. Elizabeth Bowen stated that they would be General Fund vehicles.

JP Moore asked how the fuel and maintenance are charged. Elizabeth Bowen stated that the vehicles are listed under Non-departmental, Department 23, so maintenance would be charged to the General Fund, and each department is responsible for its fuel costs.

JP Curry asked if there is a problem which indicates a need for a third vehicle. Elizabeth Bowen stated that it is not an ongoing problem, but that both vehicles are frequently checked out, and a third vehicle would be helpful. She added that the County Clerk's office is the most frequent user.

JP Douglas stated that in the past, the court had tried to establish a travel policy, and suggested that they now set a policy stating that if a county employee is going to a meeting or to training, they are required to check with the car pool first to see if a vehicle is available before they could be reimbursed for mileage. He stated they need to see if there is enough savings to get a return on the investment. Elizabeth Bowen stated that there is not a written county policy in place, but that each Elected Official is following the plan of checking out a county vehicle first. Richard McComas stated that since the Elected Officials have been made aware of the car pool, it is being used more.

JP Hawkins asked what kind of price range is being considered for the vehicle. Elizabeth Bowen stated that they would stay with the state contract, look at miles-per-gallon and the usability of the vehicle, and by the next Finance Committee meeting they will know which vehicle they want to purchase, but it would be less than \$20,000.

JP Hawkins made motion to forward the recommendation for an appropriation ordinance request to purchase an additional vehicle for the car pool to the August 2, 2011 Finance Committee agenda, seconded by JP King

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

3. Report: Minch Springs Road Bridge

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that a meeting was held at the Avoca Community Center for discussion on the Minch Springs Road Bridge with 50 to 60 people in attendance. He stated that the county is going to rebuild the Minch Springs Road Bridge, and that several land owners have

agreed to donate land to straighten the right of way. He stated that \$150,000 has been budgeted for the bridge, and that 87.5% of that amount will be reimbursed by FEMA.

4. Report: Transportation Committee Tour

JP Douglas stated that a Transportation Committee Tour was held June 25, 2011 and asked for any comments or feedback on the tour, and if they thought it was beneficial.

JP Curry stated that they need to prioritize some of the bridge repair. He stated that the Fisher Ford Bridge is not displacing a lot of people like the Colonel Meyers Road Bridge, and they need to look at what is needed the most.

JP King stated that he felt that the tour was very beneficial and informative, and he was impressed with how it turned out.

JP Winscott stated that he was very pleased, and that this is something that should be set up on a periodic basis.

JP Douglas stated that they heard from concerned citizens at each location they toured. He stated that he had learned a lot and that the tour was very beneficial, and he sees an opportunity for possible economic development.

5. Road Department Updates: Administrator of Public Service Gary Black

Gary Black reported on the Road and Bridge 2-Year Plan for 2011-2012, and stated that the plan shows the different areas of work and the Justice of the Peace who represents the area. He stated that Benton County's road crews are approximately six months behind schedule due to all the snowstorms and flooding that has occurred this year. He reported on the status of the three bridges that have been totally washed out; 1) a temporary bridge has been provided for the Sugar Creek Bridge; 2) the Minch Springs Bridge has been torn out and they are waiting on the hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) study to be completed, which should be in about 60 days; 3) the Snavely Road Bridge has issues with the approaches on each side, but it will be re-opened soon. He reported that the both the Northwest and the Southwest Road Department crews have been working on the Logan Cave Road Bridge.

Gary Black stated that 20 workers have been provided by a National Emergency Grant, so there are presently eleven workers to help with the storm clean up, and that others will be sent at a later date. He stated that the crews are set to clean up the debris along the sides and culverts of the roads that was caused by the flooding; work with the bridge crew; and to work with the road patch crews filling potholes. He added that Highway 102 is now open.

Gary Black stated that there are new federal regulations which will require the county to replace its street signs and traffic signs by 2018; by January 2012 all agencies will have to establish and implement a sign maintenance program that addresses the minimum sign retroreflectivity requirements; and by 2015 all agencies must comply with the new retroreflectivity requirements for most of the traffic signs installed, including all red and white or white and black "regulator" signs, stop signs, speed limit signs, yellow and black warning signs, and ground-mounted green and white "guide" signs, except street name signs. He said that by 2018, all agencies must comply with the new retroreflectivity requirements for overhead guide signs and all street name signs, and added that the sign-making equipment that they now have will not work.

Gary Black recognized Fleet Manager Dennis Greenlee, who reported that the new regulations require larger lettering and the words to be spelled out in upper-case and lower-case lettering, and that currently the county's street sign names are in all upper-case letters. Dennis Greenlee stated that the program will cost about \$3,500 for the purchase of additional equipment, with an

additional increase for the new materials. Gary Black stated that Grants Administrator Richard Redfearn is looking into grant money for this project.

JP Douglas stated that he would like to see a total figure of what this project will cost the county. He added that the committee may want to consider doing a resolution protesting this mandate. He stated that county roads are in better shape and condition than they have ever been in the history of Benton County, but that there is always room for improvement. He asked if there is anything that the county can do to improve the county's road maintenance program.

Gary Black stated that their goal is to improve how the county maintains county roads. He stated the County Judge has challenged his personnel, especially those supervising the road grader operators, to start having classes and to visit with them to see how they are looking at the roads. He said that they are putting together a road grading plan, with a follow-up plan to present to the County Judge. He stated that the Road Department does not have the time, money, people or the equipment to do all that they need to do. He stated that the Road Department had requested three operator positions, but the request was tabled. He stated that the previous administration cut the Road Department's budget, along with five positions, and they would like to start replacing those positions.

6. Presentation: Road Graders

Gary Black distributed a list of nine road graders being considered for replacement, along with their hours of use and estimated market trade-in value.

Dennis Greenlee stated that this is a rating system of the graders showing the hours of use and age of each vehicle. He stated that the residual on what is allowed for trade-in allowance is important. He stated that eleven graders were replaced in 2006 for a little over \$400,000 because of the good trade-in residual and buy-back. He stated if the decision is made to purchase these graders it would be included in the 2012 Budget cycle. He reported on the nine graders listed and the possible problems with the graders having high hours of use. He stated at this time they have 22 Caterpillar graders, along with a software program to diagnosis problems. He added that when they go out to bid, they will look at installing back-up cameras on the graders, for the safety of the public and to reduce the county's liability. He stated that the estimated replacement cost for nine graders would be approximately \$1 million.

Lengthy discussion was held on the graders to be considered for replacement and the replacement cost.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that at the Finance Committee, \$2 million had been requested for 10 road graders at \$200,000 each, but their trade-in value had not been taken into consideration at that time, and there are other equipment needs in the Road Department, such as a crack-sealing machine and a road roller.

Further discussion was held on the maintenance and trade in value of the road graders.

JP King stated that he would like to have more information on the road graders to be replaced, and an estimate of their trade-in values and warranties.

JP Douglas stated that a Transportation Committee meeting will be held next month for more information and discussion.

Adjournment

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.