

January 27, 2015

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT**

A Public Safety Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Jones, Adams, Allen, Leadabrand, Anglin, Shadlow, Moehring

Others Present: County Judge Bob Clinard, JP's K. Harrison, J. Harrison, Curry, Meyers, Sandlin, Circuit Judge Doug Schrantz, Administrator of Public Services Jeff Clark, Administrator of Public Safety Marshal Watson, Comptroller Brenda Guenther, Administrator of General Services John Sudduth, Department of Emergency Management Director Robert McGowen, 9-1-1 Operations Director Mary Kay Sullivan, OEC Director Michael DeRose, Fire Marshall Marc Trollinger, Hight-Jackson Associates PA Director Gary Jackson, Project Director Allie McKenzie, Jay Allen Walton Family Foundation spokesman

Media: Tom Sissom

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

### **Public Comments**

None

### **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Update:**

Administrator of Public Services Marshal Watson reported that the City of Springdale has announced that as one of the ambulance service providers responding to calls in the unincorporated areas of Benton County they will no longer respond to calls outside the city limits starting January 1, 2016. He added that an ambulance service provider replacement has not been found.

JP Meyers stated that the district that he represents includes the largest part of the county now served by Springdale's ambulance. He stated he has heard from his constituents about the uncertain future of the service, and that he would like to see something settled soon.

Lengthy discussion was held on the City of Springdale's announcement that they would no longer furnish ambulance services to the unincorporated areas of the county.

### **Ice Storm Plans:**

Administrator of Public Services Jeff Clark reported that the Road Department is prepared for a possible snow or ice storm.

### **Courthouse Update:**

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he is bringing information to the Quorum Court pertaining to the new Benton County Justice Center and that in the next few meetings of the Public Safety/Justice

Facility Committee they will be provided with criteria and aspects of a modern new facility for our county, and that the specific areas to be considered are:

- Historical and projected data of the court caseloads handled by the Circuit Courts in the County
- Projected programming of a designed layout and estimated costs for a new county facility focusing on; Functionally, Safety & Security, Public Access, Fiscal Responsibility and Future Expansion
- Site Location options including access, parking, traffic flow and proximity to other existing county facilities
- Financing options including but not limited to:
  - Dedicated sales tax increase
  - Bonding Program
  - Property Millage Increase
  - Private Financing
  - Combination of any of the above
- Short and long term use of the historic courthouse for county purposes.

Judge Clinard stated that these bullet points will be covered within the next few months and that those that toured the courthouse, knows that timing is of the essence. We need to move forward in a slow, deliberate, manner and get to the bottom of what we are going to do and how we are going to pay. He stated that he will work with Public Safety/Justice Facility Chairman JP Jones to schedule presentations of accurate information on these areas to be considered and that the committee will be presented with history, facts, estimates and sometimes speculative opinions for their discernment. He suggested that they create a subcommittee of the Public Safety and Finance committees to determine the optimum financing option, as the design will be subject to what the court determines can be absorbed within our existing and future budgets. He stated at the appropriate time and when this committee has sufficient information, he will select the option proposed by this committee to forward to the Finance Committee for approval.

JP Allen stated that we are looking at two possible options: 1) build a new judicial center out by the jail; or 2) or see how we can salvage the current courthouse facility.

JP Jones stated we will be looking through all of the options, so that we will know what is available.

Hight-Jackson Associates PA Director Gary Jackson stated that this presentation is to give the basics of what it takes to have a secure court system. He stated that two years ago the court was presented at that time with three options, two areas downtown and one out by the jail. He said since that time they have done ten additional studies and a lot of work based on what it takes to build a modern, secure courthouse that will serve the justice system for many years to come.

Hight-Jackson Associates Project Director Allie McKenzie gave a Power-Point presentation illustrating the three locations in consideration; 1) directly behind the historic courts facility; 2) across the street beside the Annex building; 3) and on Highway 102, next to the jail. Allie McKenzie explained that some of the modern courthouse planning issues are; a) functional space standards; b) adjacency relationships; c) stacking and blocking; d) security requirements; e) and technology requirements.

JP Jones stated that the Power-Point presentation provided an overview for what type of security considerations that we are looking for and an idea of what we want in a new courts facility.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that he has decided not to do the work to the old courthouse building and asked to postpone the renovation of the first floor, possibly forfeiting the grant money, until we get more information.

Jay Allen, Walton Family Foundation spokesman stated that the Walton Family Foundation took the Quorum Court's action endorsing the \$2.8 million grant for work on the first floor offices of the old courthouse as a formal acceptance and that the grant is time sensitive.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that after looking at every aspect of it, he was not going to do the work right now, as he could not see spending \$2 million on renovating the first floor of the courthouse building. He said that at the time of accepting the grant he was not sure, but that he is now. He stated that there are three major reasons: 1) to move 20-plus deputy prosecuting attorneys, and not disrupt our court system would be extremely difficult, if not impossible; 2) we do not know the future of the first floor of that building, and he could not see renovating it for one use, when it may turn out it needs to be used for something different; 3) the impact of doing a \$2 million construction project in a working courthouse would be disruptive to the courts system. He stated that he would like to see the grant delayed until it is determined what is going to be the use of the first floor, and the best location for the Prosecuting Attorney.

Several Justices expressed their disappointment of Judge Clinard's decision not to do the renovations to the first floor of the old courthouse, and accept the \$2.8 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation.

JP Anglin stated that the JPs voted on doing this restoration of the old courthouse whether the courts are going to be downtown or out on Highway 102.

Further discussion was held on the county accepting the Walton Family Foundation \$2.8 million grant.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that the Walton Family Foundation grant for \$2.8 million is a wonderful grant. He said preserving the courthouse and using that courthouse for as many years that are reasonable for the purpose of this county, is on the top of his list. He stated that his objection is the function of trying to do a \$2 million renovation in the basement of a working courts facility. He stated that a big part of his objection is security, and not knowing what we are going to do in the future. He stated that we need to step back and look before spending the money. He stated that he did not think that it was a wise use of anyone's money, and that it was his decision not to accept the grant.

Judge Clinard reported that the War Eagle Bridge is functionally obsolete, and is structurally not safe to carry the kind of traffic that it gets now or in the future. He stated that he will look at replacing the bridge while preserving the old one. He stated his first option is to bypass the bridge with a structure that meets the current codes in the state, and to keep the current bridge if possible for pedestrians and bicycles. Judge Clinard stated that a public meeting will be held for the people living in the area and people who are interested in the bridge to come and hear the county's aims directly and have a chance to offer input.

JP Allen stated that he respects Judge Clinard's decision but that he does not agree with his decision not to accept the Walton Family Foundation grant. He stated that there are ways to do renovations to the building.

JP Jones stated that he would like for the justices to look and understand the options that are available to build a new courts facility or add to the existing building.

Further lengthy discussion was held among the justices at the potential options available in the feasibility study to build a new court facility.

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that thorough discussions need to be held about location and financing options available.

JP Jones announced that a Public Safety – Courts Facility meeting will be held Monday, March 2, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

**Other Business**

None

After motion and second meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.