

Committee of the Whole Report

November 10, 2015

The Committee of the Whole met Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, Benton County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

13 JPs Present: Easley, Shadlow, J. Harrison, Allen, K. Harrison, Adams, Sandlin, Anglin, Chiocco, Slinkard, Leadabrand, Meyers, Moehring

2 Absent: Jones, Moore

Others Present: Comptroller Brenda Guenther, Election Commission Chairman Russell Anzalone, Election Commission Secretary John Brown, Election Coordinator Kim Dennison

Media: Tom Sissom – Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

JP Tom Allen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

JP J. Harrison made motion to suspend the rules and read all ordinances and resolutions by title only, seconded by JP Shadlow.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

1. Resolution Request Authorizing the County Judge of Benton County to Apply for a GIF Fire Protection Grant on Behalf of Hickory Creek Volunteer Fire Department; Sponsor: JP Brent Meyers

Comptroller Brenda Guenther read the proposed resolution request by title only.

JP Meyers said that this request is a grant for \$25,000 for the volunteer fire department to buy a rescue vehicle. They will be putting up \$5,000 of their own money; the total for the vehicle they are buying will be \$30,000.

JP Meyers made motion to forward this resolution request to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP J. Harrison.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

2. Resolution Request Authorizing the County Judge of Benton County to Apply for a GIF Fire Protection Grant on Behalf of Pleasure Heights Volunteer Fire Department; Sponsor: JP Barry Moehring

Comptroller Brenda Guenther read the proposed resolution request by title only.

JP Moehring said that this request is for the Pleasure Heights volunteer fire department. They will supply \$2,500 so that the County Judge can apply for a grant for \$16,360 to make up the difference.

JP Moehring made motion to forward this resolution request to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Chiocco.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

3. Resolution Request Authorizing the County Judge of Benton County to Apply for a GIF Fire Protection Grant on Behalf of Northwest Benton County Volunteer Fire-EMS Department (NEBCO Fire-EMS); Sponsor: JP Barry Moehring

Comptroller Brenda Guenther read the proposed resolution request by title only.

JP Moehring made motion to forward this resolution request to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Sandlin.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

4. Appropriation Ordinance Request Levying 2015 Taxes for Collection in the Year 2016 for Benton County, and Each City, School District, and Special Tax Unit in Benton County, Arkansas; Sponsor: JP Mary L. Slinkard

Comptroller Brenda Guenther read the proposed appropriation ordinance by title only.

JP Slinkard explained that this request is the regular enactment for all the taxes that have to be levied for schools, cities and the county; it is just the regular ordinance that has to be passed in November.

JP Slinkard made motion to forward this appropriation ordinance request to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Chiocco.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

5. Appropriation Ordinance Request Amending Appropriation Ordinance No. O-2014-84 (2015 Benton County Budget) Appropriating Additional Monies and Authorizing the Appropriation of Additional Revenues and Expenditures, Department 0101, County Clerk Cost Fund, Fund 3005; Sponsor: JP Mary L. Slinkard

Comptroller Brenda Guenther read the proposed appropriation ordinance by title only.

JP Slinkard said that this request is to authorize the county clerk to purchase electronic poll books for the elections from her cost fund.

JP Slinkard made motion to forward this appropriation ordinance request to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Sandlin.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

6. Discussion: Implementing Vote Centers in Benton County – Election Commission

Russell Anzalone and John Brown from the Election Commission, along with Election Coordinator Kim Dennison, gave a short presentation on the implementation of vote centers in Benton County.

Russell Anzalone stated that a vote center allows them to program the poll books just like they do for early voting; this means that any voter can go to any vote center to cast their vote. They currently have sixty-seven polling sites and, by going to vote centers, they can reduce that number to forty-six. The advantage is that it allows any voter to go to any vote center and vote. It will also reduce the amount of poll workers needed on Election Day. Currently, they need about 500 poll workers at the polling sites and this will reduce those workers by about a third. He presented a document from the dashboard that showed where the vote centers would be located. He said that, along with that, they will be obtaining fifty-four additional voting machines. They will put them out in these centers so that there are more machines and the lines to vote will be shorter. He presented data regarding past elections and the percentage of voters voting in that election. They hope that more people will be encouraged to vote because they will not have to go to a specific poll site. He stated that they expect to save \$41,512 in 2016 by implementing vote centers.

JP Allen asked if this reduction is primarily due to the reduction in poll workers.

Russell Anzalone said that it is due to the reduction in workers and also the reduction in the number of paper ballots needed.

JP Shadlow asked if this will combine districts.

Russell Anzalone said there will not be any specific districts; it will be like early voting.

JP K. Harrison stated that this was presented at the November 9, 2015 Legislative Committee meeting and the committee responded favorably to the presentation. The only real concern was the lack of paper ballots.

Russell Anzalone said that they now have a possible solution for that issue. They have coordinated with the County Clerk's office and arranged for paper ballots to be available at the County Clerk's office on Election Day.

JP Moehring stated that he went to the Election Commission meeting earlier that day. He feels that they have done a great job in a short amount of time. His original concerns were budgetary but it will come in under budget. There were other concerns about contingencies and what they will do if something happens, although being able to vote in any voting center does help if there is bad weather. He asked how they will ensure that the person is voting the correct ballot because there have been mistakes made in the past.

Russell Anzalone answered that these are the same cartridges that they use in early voting. The only difference is that currently the cartridge is only programmed for the specific polling site and whatever ballots they have there.

Kim Dennison said that, when a voter checks in to vote, they will be given a piece of paper that will have their ballot style on it. That will be carried over to the IVotronic machine to select the ballot style listed.

JP Moehring asked if this is a universal cartridge or if they have to select different cartridges for different ballots.

Kim Dennison stated that it is universal.

JP Moehring said that he was involved in an election where the precinct was split into different JP districts and there were people who voted in his race but weren't actually supposed to vote in his race because the wrong cartridge was inserted. He wants to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Kim Dennison said that every ballot will be programmed on the cartridge.

Russell Anzalone stated that they had a meeting with Emergency Management, the Road Department and the Sheriff's Department. They have helped in the past with inclement weather to get poll workers to the polling sites; they have started a contingency plan in case of inclement weather.

JP J. Harrison stated that the Election Commission presented very well at the Legislative Committee meeting and he was very impressed. He praised the Election Commission for their work on this implementation.

JP J. Harrison made motion to send this discussion to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda, seconded by JP Sandlin.

JP Anglin asked if they are having more early voting sites or if it is the same number.

Kim Dennison stated that they are increasing from nine to eleven early voting sites this year.

JP Anglin asked if any of these Election Day polling places are early voting sites also.

Russell Anzalone confirmed that they are.

JP Chiocco thanked them for providing paper ballots because that is very important to her. She asked if the County Clerk's office would be open at the same time as all the other polling sites.

Kim Dennison said the paper ballots would be available from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. but only at the Bentonville County Clerk's office.

JP Leadabrand stated that he is very pleased that they made provisions for the paper ballots. He asked if the paper ballots would only be available on Election Day.

Kim Dennison answered that they will be available during early voting, too, at the three County Clerk's offices in Rogers, Siloam Springs and Bentonville.

JP Slinkard said that this may reduce the requirement for provisional ballots.

Russell Anzalone said that almost all of the provisional ballots are because of people going to the wrong polling site.

JP Slinkard said that the e-poll books will help in doing address changes. She believes it will be a real compliment to Benton County to implement this system.

JP Leadabrand said that he always goes online and orders his ballot before the election.

Russell Anzalone stated that this is one of the problems that they have with it taking a long time to vote; people wait until they get to the actual voting machine to read over it before they cast their vote.

JP Chiocco said that the paper ballots go faster.

JP Allen added that it also depends on how the wording of the actual title is and whether or not it is misleading.

JP Shadlow asked if they will have a paper ballot for every area at every one of these locations.

Russell Anzalone said they will for early voting and only at the county clerk's office on Election Day. They estimate having around 250 different ballots on Election Day for the primary.

JP Sandlin said that, at the Legislative Committee meeting last night, JP Anglin mentioned keeping the extra poll workers for this first go around and then cutting back on the staff in the future.

JP K. Harrison said that the more they get this out to the public, the better, so that people will understand how it all works. He said that this is especially true for the vote center locations.

Kim Dennison said they are required to print the locations in the paper twice before the election.

Russell Anzalone said that they are planning on having a media blitz through radio and television. They will be using the newspaper as well. The two radio stations that they have used in the past were very helpful. They feel that the PSAs they received from the radio stations helped them to get to 48% in early voting.

JP Anglin mentioned KURM and any other groups they could enlist to help spread the news.

Russell Anzalone said that he will get information out to all of the different clubs so that they will have information for them to pass out to their memberships.

JP Sandlin said that, if they each took some information to different entities to put in their break rooms, they will certainly get discussed there.

JP Allen said that it will be important to give advance information about how to get a paper ballot since this is different from what they have done in the past and this is critical information get out to the public.

John Brown clarified that, for early voting, paper ballots will be available at all of the County Clerk's offices. They will not be available at the early voting sites because there is no security. On Election Day, paper ballots will only be available at the County Clerk's office in Bentonville because that building has security.

JP Allen stated that this was brought to the meeting as a discussion item but it is important to read the title of the proposed ordinance before it can be passed on to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda. He read the title of the proposed ordinance as follows: "Proposed Ordinance Establishing Vote Centers for Benton County and to Maximize Use of Electronic Voting."

JP Slinkard suggested that it should have an emergency amendment added to the proposed ordinance because time is of the essence. It must be filed at least thirty days prior to early voting.

Kim Dennison said that they must have approval back by January 15, 2016

JP Slinkard made motion to amend the ordinance to include an emergency clause, seconded by JP Anglin.

JP J. Harrison said that he thinks they can just discuss this at Quorum Court because they can suspend the rules and read it three times. He suggested that they do it that way.

JP Allen asked if the amendment needs approval by the original person who made the motion.

Comptroller Brenda Guenther stated that it needs a second but it does not have to be the same people who made the original motion.

JP Chiocco clarified that, if they put the emergency clause in, they will not be doing the three readings at the Quorum Court meeting.

JP Allen said that they do not have to read it three times, if it has an emergency clause. However, the emergency clause must be read separately and they must approve the emergency clause as well as the original ordinance.

JP J. Harrison said that he gives his approval for the emergency clause to be added to the original proposed ordinance.

JP Leadabrand suggested running this by County Attorney George Spence.

JP Allen called for the vote to amend the proposed ordinance to include an emergency clause.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JP Allen called for the vote to send the proposed amended ordinance to the November 19, 2015 Quorum Court agenda.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JP Chiocco stated that she hopes that Tom Sissom will do an article in the newspaper about this before the Quorum Court meeting so that the public has a chance to read about it before it is voted on.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Comptroller Brenda Guenther announced a Budget Committee meeting for Thursday, November 12, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. She stated that it will be a long meeting because she has invited all the elected officials and NEBCO will also be there.

JP Chiocco announced that the Grievance Committee hearing will be on Tuesday, November 17, 2015 in Circuit Judge Robin Greene's courtroom.

JP Shadlow inquired as to who determines the ultimate decision regarding the outcome of the Grievance Committee hearing.

JP Chiocco stated that they can let them know what their finding is but ultimately it is up to the elected official.

JP Allen said that it is advisory. The elected official doesn't necessarily have to agree with the committee's decision but then the other side can take it to the court system.

JP J. Harrison announced that Quorum Court is meeting a week early on Thursday, November 19, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

JP Slinkard asked when the Budget Committee would be finished.

Brenda Guenther announced that there is a meeting this Thursday, November 16, 2015 at 5:00 p.m., November 23, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. and then there will be a joint Budget/Finance meeting on December 3, 2015 at 5:00 p.m.

JP Allen stated that it is his hope to have it done by the November 23rd meeting. He said that he thinks they should start making cuts on November 16th. He recommended that they make sure they are reviewing their notes, review what's been presented on the dashboard and call Brenda with any questions. He stated that he and Brenda would be meeting and he is going to suggest some cuts. He is not saying that anyone has to endorse these suggestions but he hopes, as chairman, he can get the ball rolling on making the cuts.

JP Leadabrand said there are some cuts that are more obvious than others.

JP Allen encouraged everyone to come prepared at the meeting on Monday with what they think needs to be cut. He does not want to discourage anyone's opinion because this is a process for fifteen people, not just a couple of people.

JP Leadabrand stated that some of the justices received a certified letter and asked if that should be turned over to the County Attorney.

JP Allen said it was appropriate to contact him about it.

JP Meyers asked when the discussion on raises for employees will be.

JP Allen said it could be addressed at Thursday's meeting because it is pretty cut and dried as far as the percentage.

JP Meyers said it is hard to cut capital items before employee raises are considered.

JP Allen said that they need to see where they are and what kind of raises they are talking about. He added that, if they don't cut capital, there will be no raises.

JP K. Harrison said that Rogers is doing 2% across the board for raises.

JP Slinkard made motion to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.