

# **JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

## **Regular Session Agenda Thursday, February 6th, 2025 6 PM**

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Austin Hosford, Commissioners Ben White, JT Surles, Jessica Gramling, and Gene Hall were present. Clerk Trey Hightower, County Manager Shannon Metty, HR Director Renee Long, County Attorney Heather Encinosa, Assistant County Attorney Evan Rosenthal, and County Budget Officer Gus Rojas were also present.

The meeting on February 6 discussed the renovation of the old gym into a multi-use facility, including a basketball court and a 3,000 sq. ft. shelter. The project requires \$5 million, potentially funded by legislative appropriations. Concerns were raised about the gym's current state and potential liability issues. The board also reviewed the county's comprehensive plan, debating the need for a commercial category and adjusting mixed-use zoning to prevent high-intensity commercial development near residential areas. The board agreed to revise the plan to ensure compliance with state requirements and to address loopholes in the land development code. The meeting discussed the management of forfeited funds, including \$150,000 from frozen bank accounts and cash recovered after an arrest. Heather Encinosa outlined plans to record restitution and judgment liens and suggested hiring companies to economically recover assets. Shannon Metty proposed renewing a lease with Jefferson Arts, suggesting a commercial rental rate and utility payments. Chairman Hosford advocated for county staff expansion into the property. The board agreed to charge a commercial rental rate and discussed utility costs, which are around \$500 monthly. They also considered building two pickleball courts, with a budget of \$150,000, and explored grant opportunities for funding.

1. **6PM Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Workshop Discussion**
3. **Approval of the Agenda**
  - **Commissioner Hall motions to approve the agenda with the addition of the gym to the legislative priorities list and the mosquito control funds to the supplemental budget, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**
4. **Public Announcements, Presentations, and Awards**
5. **Citizens Request and Input on Non-Agenda Items**
6. **Consent Agenda**
  - **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**
7. **General Business**
  - a) **NFEDP Appointment**
    - Shannon Metty explains that Commissioner Hall can no longer serve on the board and this position is open.
    - **Commissioner Surles motions to elect Commissioner Hosford to the NFEDP Appointment with Therea Sterling as an alternate, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**
  - b) **Legislative Priority Requests**

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- Shannon Metty proposes \$1.3 million for courthouse improvements and \$5 million for the gymnasium project.
- Chairman Hosford questions the feasibility of funding high-speed internet county-wide.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the legislative priority list, including the gymnasium project and mosquito control funding, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

### c) Proposed ACH/Wire Policy and Resolution

- Clerk Hightower presents the ACH/Wire Policy for approval.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the ACH/Wire Policy, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

### d) Supplemental Budget

- Gus Rojas explains that we have three supplemental budgets now. The first being we have received an extra \$1984.67 in funds from the state. It will be used as follows: \$1000 for more tools and implements, \$250 gas and fuel, and the rest being miscellaneous supplies. The second supplemental budget is the \$14,400 that we have received from the T-Mobile hometown grant. The last supplemental budget is the \$325,430 grant from the Division of Emergency Management.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the supplemental budget, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

### e) FY 24-25 Budget to Actuals-1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

- Gus Rojas provides a snapshot of where we are at through January 31. He provides brief highlights regarding overall revenues over expenditures, grant reimbursements, and general ad valorem.

### f) FY 25-26 Budget Meeting Schedule

- **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve the budget meeting schedule, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously passed by the board.**

### g) Hall Park Playground Update

- County Manager Shannon Metty explains that they have received some quotes for updating the Hall Park playground. They are also going to repaint the basketball court.

## 8. Comprehensive Plan Transmittal Hearing

- Franklin Wheeler provides background context regarding the process of the comprehensive plan transmittal hearing.
- Alara Mills-Gutcher discusses the comprehensive plan update, including the need to meet state requirements and public input. They have been through two public

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hearings with the planning board, and they have made some recommendations which are presented today. Currently at the transmittal process, which is the date when we decide whether we are going to transmit this document to the state.

- Commissioner Gramling inquires if Alara met with any of the board members prior to a few weeks ago to get their input on the comprehensive plan, to which she responds that they met with Commissioner Hosford. It is not disclosed when they met with him.
- This is the document that sets the vision for Jefferson County for the next twenty years. It is required for each local government to adopt a comprehensive plan. Explains the difference between a “clean” copy and a strike through copy.
- The board reviews the future land use element, which is the largest element, with suggestions to add a commercial category and adjust mixed-use percentages.
- Chairman Hosford asks what became a commercial future land use element, to which Alara replies nothing, but that it would be an option for an applicant to apply for to amend the future land use map.
- Discussion about the parameters of legislative decisions before the board. It appears before the local planning agency first, then the board can decide whether it wants to adopt it by ordinance.
- Discussion between Chairman Hosford and Alara regarding the benefits of adding a commercial future land use element to the comprehensive plan. It provides additional economic opportunities within the county.
- Development parameters were added to each of the future land use categories as required by statute.
- Chairman Hosford expresses concern about the compatibility of mixed-use developments with existing residential areas.
- Evan Rosenthal explains that the current comp plan makes these aspirational; by making these mandatory, it creates some serious issues.
- Shannon Metty mentions that if it is organized per parcel, then anybody who comes in must have a mixed use on that parcel.
- Heather Encinosa reiterates the language being aspirational rather than mandatory. If it is proposed as mandatory, it would limit the last people in based on what has already been developed. She suggests working on some additional language and bringing the document back for review at a later date.
- Chairman Hosford agrees with the need for the document to be reworked.
- Shannon Metty suggests only allowing multi-families and not allowing single families.

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- Commissioner Gramling requests clarification as to the benefit of changing the language we currently have pertaining to mixed-use business/residential. It provides clarity on how you are going to handle the district.
- Evan Rosenthal asks how the percentage would be determined for non-residential under the proposed language. There are no criteria on how it is measured; it would be calculated with property appraiser's tax code based on acres of the parcel.
- Commissioner Gramling argues that the proposed language does not make anything clearer.
- Shannon Metty explains that if we leave the language as it is, then we could potentially have a high intensity use such as a truck stop next to a residential house.
- Chairman Hosford states that if we did it per parcel, it would alleviate that issue.
- Commissioner Gramling states that the truck stop issue should not be the basis for decision-making regarding the comp plan. Alara clarifies that it is not based on that alone and suggests taking out the mixed-use nomenclature.
- Evan Rosenthal reiterates the advantage of eliminating the percentages completely.
- Heather Encinosa explains that in areas that are already largely built out, it is difficult to go back and retrofit this percentage into it.
- Chairman Hosford asks if they are going to take this document and see if we can apply this to the county with that language—compatible is the key word. Alara confirms that it is great language to add (compatibility analysis).
- Alara draws attention to the local planning agency's recommendation.
- Evan Rosenthal requests direction from the board. More discussion between the board, county staff, and citizen regarding the mixed-use language and definitions.
- Commissioner Surles wants to send the comp plan back to the state and gather more frequently for another year. He does not feel like the top line of our mission statement is holding true. He does not want to take anything away from individuals that they already have. He wants to consult someone else who understands we want to protect our rural community. He ultimately declares he wants to get the document up to its legal standards and turn it back over to the state whilst spending another year on it.
- Heather Encinosa requests clarification regarding Commissioner Surles statement to "get the document legal." He responds that he is referring to solar and property rights.
- The board discusses the need for a clear mission statement and the potential impact of the comprehensive plan on future development.
- Alara explains that the protection of the rural community and farmland is loud and clear.

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- Commissioner Hosford agrees with Commissioner Surles' wish to send it back to the state for another year. He would like to see our mission statement put at the top.
- County Manager Shannon Metty states that the comprehensive plan is currently overdue with the State; it was due in November. She expresses hesitation in taking too long on the comprehensive plan.
- Commissioner Gramling explains that she does not feel heard nor do the people in her district.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to send the comprehensive plan back to the state for further review and updates, seconded by Commissioner White.**
- **The motion is amended to encompass any other state requirements, adding that we have county standard paved roads, any subdivisions, and a change in the mixed-use, business, residential language to accommodate compatibility, as well as the mission statement. It is unanimously passed by the board.**
- Citizens to be Heard: Michelle Arceneaux, Mike Willis

#### 9. Clerk of Court

#### 10. County Engineer

- Proposed consensus from the last meeting to DOT regarding Boston Highway. They are waiting for direction from them to move forward with that design.

#### 11. County Attorney

- Heather Encinosa states that she emailed the board a copy of the restitution order that we received from the court on criminal matters involving the former Clerk, Kirk Reams, and Charles Culp and Tyler McNeill. They have been awarded about \$1.24 million in combined criminal restitution and recoverable costs.
- Chairman Hosford emphasizes the need to coordinate with Clerk Hightower to understand the financial situation better and paint a clear picture regarding where that money is going.
- Heather Encinosa explains the process of recovering forfeited funds and the steps involved in recording restitution and judgment liens. She mentions the potential use of asset identification companies to economically pursue restitution, which will be a future board decision.

#### 12. County Manager

- Shannon Metty discusses the lease renewal with Jefferson Arts and the responsibilities of each party regarding maintenance and utilities.
- Chairman Hosford expresses a preference for county staff to expand into the property due to its prime location.
- Shannon Metty suggests a six-month lease extension to allow for a transition period if the board decides to use the building for county staff.

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- Commissioner White supports the idea of charging rent and having the tenants pay their own utilities to generate revenue for the county.
- Shannon Metty mentions the current utility bill of \$500 a month and suggests charging a commercial rental rate.
- Heather Encinosa confirms consensus to charge a commercial rental rate and to have the tenants pay their own utilities.
- Shannon Metty plans to research other community businesses to determine a suitable rental amount.
- The board agrees to discuss the rental rate and utility bill at the next meeting, with input from the Jefferson Arts staff.

### **13. County Commissioners**

- Commissioner Surles inquires about the VA Director and is informed by Shannon Metty that Kaysana Jones is currently in the library.
- Chairman Hosford asks if anyone else receives calls about pickleball reports, and Shannon Metty confirms she does.
- Shannon Metty provides an update on the pickleball court project, including the need for drainage improvements and the cost of construction.
- The board discusses the potential for building multiple pickleball courts and the possibility of obtaining grants due to the growing popularity of the sport.

### **14. Adjourn**

- **Commissioner Surles motions to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**