

# **JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

## **Regular Session Agenda Thursday, March 20th, 2025 6 PM**

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

The meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup> began with the approval of the agenda and a video presentation of Governor Ron DeSantis on the importance of county audits. A citizen requested a streetlight on a dangerous intersection, which is already on the list. The board approved a \$25/month lease for the Jefferson Arts Gallery for a year, with the option to extend. The financial audit for the year ending September 30, 2023, showed a net increase of \$2,990,000 in the general fund. The board also discussed upgrading courthouse security cameras and the need for timely quotes for various projects.

### **1. 6PM Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance**

### **2. Approval of the Agenda**

- **Commissioner Hall motions to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**
- A two-minute video from Governor Ron DeSantis is presented, emphasizing the importance of county audits.
- Chairman Hosford encourages the board to step up and request an audit, highlighting Bay County's leadership.
- Sheriff McNeil supports the audit request and mentions discussions with the Governor's Office and constitutional officers.
- **Commissioner Hall motions to approve the audit request, seconded by Commissioner Gramling.**
- **Commissioner Hall amends the motion to include all constitutional officers, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

### **3. Public Announcements, Presentations & Awards**

### **4. Citizens Request & Input on Non-Agenda**

- Ashley Cowen requests a streetlight on 90 and Lloyd, a dangerous intersection, which is already on the list
- Commissioners express support for addressing the streetlight issue.

### **5. Consent Agenda**

- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

### **6. General Business**

#### **a. Hall Park Playground Contract Agreement**

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- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the Hall Park Playground Contract Agreement, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

## **b. Jefferson Art Gallery**

- The Jefferson Arts Gallery lease agreement is discussed with a \$35 pass-through rate for sewer and water. They have already provided insurance and changed utilities over to Duke Energy. Minor modifications were made to allow them to house their art supplies. It automatically renews on a yearly basis.
- Chairman Hosford suggests a five-year lease and increasing the monthly rent to \$100 to ensure the gallery takes the lease seriously.
- Commissioner Surles suggests that the Art Gallery association get together and buy the property back from the county.
- Susan Rissman states that they made \$125 last month and concludes that the Art Gallery does not make a lot of money.
- Board discussion about the possibility of the Art Gallery buying the property in the future.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the Art Gallery Lease, seconded by Commissioner Gramling. Commissioner Hall votes in favor, and Commissioner Hosford votes in opposition. The Lease is approved by a 3 to 1 vote.**

## **c. Audit Presentation**

- Chris Moran from CPA firm Moran and Smith presents the annual financial audit for the year ending September 30, 2023.
- Key points include revenue of \$19,173,000 and expenditures of \$72,000, resulting in an excess of \$1,008,000
- The general fund had a net increase of \$2,990,000, ending with a balance of \$9,006,966.
- The audit report includes recommendations for improving financial expertise and segregation of duties.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to accept the report and give the Clerk of Court the authority to accept the final report issued pending non-substantive changes, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**
- Counsel states that it is difficult to legally evaluate what can be delegated to the Clerk of Court.
- Chris Moran states that the Clerk has a positive attitude and wants to succeed.
- Clerk Trey Hightower concurs that the finance office wants to do everything correctly. He admits that we cannot continue to be behind—he wants the audit

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done in March instead of its due date in June. His goal is to have a flawless audit by 2026.

- Commissioner Surles expresses confidence in the Clerk.
- Chris Moran states that he worked alongside the County Budget Officer, and one of the problems with the budget is that the newspaper ad did not accurately reflect the information presented in the financial statements. He feels the 2024 budget was completely correct in terms of all the constitutional officers being budgeted.
- The Board has until March 31 to submit the audit or potentially face withholding of state shared revenue.

### **7. Clerk of Court**

### **8. County Engineer**

- Shannon Metty presents on behalf of the County Engineer. Provides update on Boston Highway; all FDOT grants have been submitted.

### **9. County Attorney**

- Evan Rosenthal is advising concerning settlement negotiations and appropriations strategy concerning litigation expenditures in the following litigation matters: Jefferson County in Mark v. Winchester, referred to as the Homestead Barn case. He is requesting a closed-door executive session be scheduled on April 3, 2025, which is the date of the next regularly scheduled meeting. Special counsel Matt Shawn and a certified court reporter will be present.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously passed by the board.**

### **10. County Manager**

- Shannon Metty reminds the board of the budget workshop on April 3, 2025.
- She provides updates on various projects, including kennel construction and courthouse upgrades.
- She mentions the app, with a potential rec park feature that allows you to sign up through the app.

### **11. County Commissioners**

- Commissioner Surles discusses the need for better security at the courthouse, including upgrading camera systems.
- Clerk Hightower mentions ongoing discussions with court administration to address security concerns.
- The board agrees to prioritize courthouse security improvements in the budget.
- Shannon Metty updates the board on the pitfall project, mentioning difficulties in getting three quotes.
- Chairman Hosford suggests setting a timeline for obtaining quotes.

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**12. Adjourn**

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