

MERCER COUNTY BOARD MINUTES

July 2, 2019

Board convened at 6:52 p.m.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance roll call showed the following members present: Board Members Flowers, Frieden, Fullerlove, Gregg, Hawn, Moreland, Rind, and Sarabasa. There was a quorum present.

There were several people in attendance who spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting. Chris Brewer, Christian Leon, Darla Dixon, and Stephanie Canaday spoke regarding the Wheel Tax Ordinance and asked the Board to reconsider their position on same. Many were concerned that the revenue generated from the wheel tax would not actually go to repairing the roads. They were also concerned due to the amount of taxes citizens were already paying. Steve Clark asked for the Ordinance to be explained (he was given a copy to review); he then asked if he could speak during the general discussion on same later in the meeting. He also spoke on the stop sign at the intersection of Ridge Road and US 67 and asked the Board to consider replacing it with a stop sign that is more visible (solar panel, lights) due to the number of wrecks at that location.

Judy Redlinger was present to give an update on the condition of McClure Cemetery. She stated she is pleased with the appearance of the cemetery.

Marvin Smith was present to address the Board regarding the proposed wheel tax. He reiterated most of what was said during the public comment portion of the meeting. He suggested the County rent out the farms it owns to make money that way – NOTE: The County is currently renting out its farm and hunting ground.

Motion to approve the consent agenda by Board Member Fullerlove seconded by Board Member Frieden was approved by vote of the Board.

The matter of hiring a Zoning Officer was moved to Closed Session.

Chairman Sarabasa stated his opinion that the Wheel Tax should be put on the March 2020 ballot as a referendum so the citizens could vote on it. Board Member Moreland stated that the Highway Committee does not want to impose a tax on the citizens, but they have not found another way to generate revenue for road repairs. Without the wheel tax, the State could come in and dictate what needs to be done with the roads and tack the repair costs onto property tax bills. He stated that the proposed ordinance is for 3 years and then it would be re-evaluated to see if it should be kept or abolished. Board Member Rind explained that the money collected would be earmarked for road use only and would make up the County's portion (20%) for maintenance with the State supplementing the rest (80%). He also stated that the Board Members were not exempt from paying the proposed tax. Darla Dixon asked who was going to enforce the tax. State's Attorney Lee spoke on that issue and stated

that her office would potentially be in charge of sending delinquent notices, etc. She stated that the process has not been finalized. Board Member Moreland stated that a list would be obtained from the Secretary of State's office showing how many vehicles are registered to each citizen in the County. The wheel tax would then be imposed according to that list. Chris Brewer spoke about the strain of adding additional duties to County offices when they are already short-staffed. Darla Dixon mentioned that many of the townships have better roads than the county-maintained roads. She suggested contacting the township road supervisors and see if they have any input on how the County could combat the issue. Stephanie Canaday asked if there was a contingency plan in place in case the State doesn't come through with its 80%. Discussion also included talking to township road commissioners, if there is a contingency plan in place in case the State does not contribute their share (80%), and what the funding is currently for County roads. Board Member Frieden stated that the County should see an increase in motor fuel tax (MFT) money with the new State tax. State's Attorney Lee stated that the ordinance, if passed, would be done in 3 years and would have to be re-implemented by the Board in place at that time. Motion to approved the Wheel Tax Ordinance by Board Member Moreland seconded by Board Member Rind was put to roll call vote – 3 ayes, 5 nays, motion denied. Chairman Sarabasa stated that the roads will continue to be in a state of disrepair and will not improve in the future until funding solutions can be found. Board Member Flowers then addressed the gallery and requested that they take an active role and present their ideas for road repairs/funding to the Board.

Sheriff Terrill continued the presentation of his cost analysis, which he had touched briefly on during the Finance Committee meeting. He stated that it would cost \$1,000s to house the jail at full capacity. He also stated that full capacity will never be achieved due to separation requirements; capacity could go over 50%, but will not reach 100%. He advised the Board that foreign inmate reimbursement is currently covering the fixed costs of the jail building. He then presented the Board with his School Resource Officer (SRO) proposal. After much discussion, the Board requested Sheriff Terrill go to the Mercer County School District #404 board and request that they pay more toward the SRO's salary due the lack of funds in the County. Sheriff Terrill advised that he would take the request to the school board and report back.

Motion to approve claims by Board Member Sarabasa seconded by Board Member Rind was approved by roll call vote of the Board – 8 ayes, 0 nays. The claims presented for payment on July 15, 2019 are as follows: General Corporate \$89,153.13, Public Health \$23,572.45, Veterans Bogardus \$59.18, Community Mental Health \$13,250.00, County Highway \$12,002.82, County Aid Bridge \$8,424.26, Federal Aid Matching \$143,268.33, Township Motor Fuel \$89,906.21, Motor Fuel \$19,043.73, Animal Control \$989.82, Pet Population \$2,866.84, Special Projects Account \$390.35, Law Library \$1,192.78, Liability Insurance \$8,327.75, Probation Fees \$1,401.73, Circuit Clerk Document Storage \$923.24, Drug Crime Lab \$294.76, Assessor - GIS \$831.45 for a total of \$415,898.83.

Motion to approve the issuance of anticipation warrants to cover the County's obligations by Board Member Fullerlove seconded by Board Member Sarabasa was approved by vote of the Board.

Chairman Sarabasa then announced that the meeting was going to enter into closed session. The Board entered closed session at 8:22 p.m.

The Board re-entered open session at 9:14 p.m.

Chairman Sarabasa stated that the Zoning officer position was going to be combined with the County Administrator position and would be addressed at the August meeting.

Motion to hire the law firm of McCarthy, Callas, and Feeney for civil purposes by Board Member Fullerlove seconded by Board Member Frieden was approved by vote of the Board.

State's Attorney Lee handed out copies of the County's ethics policy and asked Board members to sign it if they had not already done so.

Chairman Sarabasa stated that the time clock issue is still open for discussion and that Bev Lower would bring suggestions to the Board at the August meeting. He also stated that if no action was taken on the matter that the new county administrator could take the matter under advisement and proceed further if they so desired.

Chairman Sarabasa mentioned that the Board had received a thank you note regarding the upkeep of McClure Cemetery.

Motion to adjourn to Tuesday, August 6th at 6:30 p.m. by Board Member Sarabasa was seconded by Board Member Gregg and was approved by vote of the Board at 9:25 p.m.