

Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
December 23, 2024

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on December 23, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. at the Southwest Annex.

Prayer was led by Vice President Montgomery, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Members Present: President Warren Fleetwood, Vice-President, Kenneth Montgomery (came in at 8:12 a.m.) and Commissioner Nick Burns

Claims: Total claims presented on 12/23/2024 were \$1,263,282.64. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Clerk/Treasurer Reports were acknowledged by the Commissioners.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Mainstream Fiber Agreement – Attorney Spindler has corresponded with Mainstream and has requested a longer amount of time for the notice to proceed and requested that all fiber be bored. He feels all requests will be met and they should know by January.

The Well She Is Strong – Emilie Brown had previously requested the County pay \$850 per month or \$10,200 for their rent fee for 2025, as they now need a private space to work. Attorney Spindler suggested a meeting with Auditor Watkins and SBoA to see if this is possible; if so, it is recommended she attend the Opioid Meeting to request this funding.

EMS Director Position – Attorney Spindler recommended this be tabled until there is a response from the Council.

Animal Shelter – Sharon Werne came to revisit the contract for the animal shelter; they have been notified that they do not qualify for the READY Grant. She explained that the READY Grant is focused on high paying jobs and a reason to bring residents to the County. Ms. Werne feels that Phase I can be done, but they are \$36,000 short on the shell of the building. (Commissioner Montgomery entered the meeting at 8:12.) Today they wish to move forward and get to the point where they can get a signed contract. They are not certain how long the pricing will stay in place, if the contract is not signed. Once signed, they will lock in current prices. Ms. Werne feels they will get the \$36,000 needed and continue raising money for the water/sewer. She requests that Commissioners sign the contract and let her proceed to build the shell. At the end of the day, the County will get a new building; there have been no tax dollars committed, and they understand this is a county building and it can always be utilized for another group if the not-for-profit animal services group should cease to exist. Animal services will quadruple their fund-raising efforts. Commissioner Fleetwood entertained a motion for a signed contract to utilize the funds they currently have secured, but no commitment beyond the ARPA dollars. Commissioner Montgomery made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

Highway Superintendent Work Agreement – Current Superintendent, Jerry Heldt will be leaving the county soon; they have an employee willing to take the position; Craig Byers is willing to step in, if

he can have a signed agreement from the Commissioners allowing him to reenter the Highway workforce with his current job, should the Superintendent job not work out. Attorney Spindler asked if Mr. Byers understands the agreement as written. Commissioner Montgomery feels Mr. Byers wants to ensure his last two years of his employment with the county before he can retire and get his vested PERF benefit. The agreement reads that he will go back to bridge crew, and he will not have a claim against the county for superintendent pay. Incoming Commissioner Lewis asked what happens if the bridge lead position is filled; and then he wonders what is to happen if all the union positions are filled, as he cannot force another union member out of their job. Commissioner Montgomery says he wants the two years to get him to his PERF vestment and retirement, nor does he care whether it is a labor position or not. It is wondered what happens if there are no open spots, then this would have to go through the Council to add a position. Commissioner Fleetwood feels the wording should be changed to move to any opening, when an opening becomes available. Commissioner Burns wonders why they must fill this position now, as they did not immediately fill this position when the last supervisor left. Commissioner Burns does not know when Superintendent Heldt's last day is, and he feels they are moving too quickly on this item. Attorney Spindler asked how soon a vacancy would be posted. Incoming Commissioner Lewis replied that it is immediately per union contract. Commissioner Burns feels this decision should wait and not be rushed. Attorney Spindler fears if someone takes the bridge position, there will be no position for Mr. Byers to revert into. Commissioner Montgomery says waiting is fine with him. Commissioner Burns does not feel this should be rushed, as no one knows when Superintendent Heldt is leaving for certain. The contract states that Mr. Byers will go back to the bridge position and one union employee cannot take another union employee out of their position, nor can the Commissioners, without progressive discipline. Commissioner Fleetwood suggested this item be tabled until January and the new group of Commissioners can decide on this.

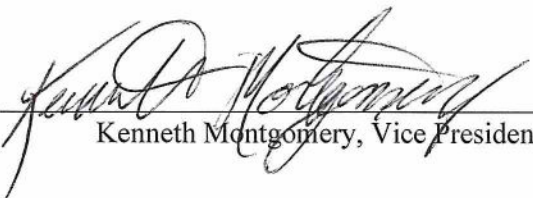
Public Defender's Grant for Social Worker/System Navigators – Public Defender Moody told Commissioners that CHINS (Children in Need of Services) cases are more than double that of two years ago; these cases are about the kids, and it is of utmost importance that they be taken care of quickly. The state has a pilot grant to assist with this problem and to readily get kids into a good placement. Social Workers/System Navigators will assist with this problem. The grant will pay 100% of the salary and benefits the first two years for two employees, 100% possibly the third year, and 70% in year four. In year five, this will fall back to the general fund to pay for this position, if it is still needed in the county. She would like to get one Social Worker/Navigator now and settle in with the one employee; it is a reimbursement program, and she will pay for this person from her supplemental fund; after the first employee is set up and running and see about adding a second Social Worker/Navigator. After the first year, the state would like this person(s) to be paid by the general fund. She would like permission to apply for the grant. Once she has the money, she will request to hire the employee. It is an experimental program that will require a data entry person, which will also be paid for by the state. This is a part-time, temporary position, and once the grant ends, this position will go away. She will let Commissioners and Council know if this grant was beneficial, but she feels it will help tremendously. She would like to pay this person approximately \$50,000 as she has researched local DCS workers' salaries. She requests permission to apply for the grant.

Commissioner Fleetwood entertained a motion to approve Public Defender Moody's grant application. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

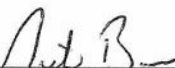
With no further discussions, Commissioner Burns motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote to adjourn is 3-0.

Minutes from the December 23, 2024, meeting.

Warren Fleetwood, President



Kenneth Montgomery, Vice President



Nick Burns, Commissioner



ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor