

FILED

JUL 09 2024

COUNTY & PROBATE COURT CLERK

QUORUM COURT MINUTES

June 24, 2024

QUORUM COURT MINUTES June 24, 2024

Judge Day called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Invocation was led by Cory Epps, Central Baptist Church.

Assembly and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Justice Couch.

Roll was called, and all Justices were present.

The first order of business was approval of Quorum Court minutes from June 10, 2024. A motion to approve minutes as prepared was made by Justice Weinstock and seconded by Justice Pasmore. Judge Day took a vote and it passed unanimously.

The Road Committee report was read by Justice Cline. Report from Public Service Committee was read by Justice Rogers, and the report from Finance Committee was read by Justice Longmire.

OLD BUSINESS

The first item on the agenda was the third reading of the **Ordinance to Establish Flood Damage Prevention Program**. A motion to suspend the rules and read by title only was made by Justice Forrest and seconded by Justice Williams. Judge Day took a vote and it passed unanimously. Ordinance was read by title, motion to accept was made by Justice Williams and seconded by Justice Pasmore. Judge Day opened the floor for any questions or comments, and with none, called for the roll to be taken. The Ordinance passed unanimously by all Justices.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution recommending the appointment of Kenny Jowers to the Valley View Fire Protection District was read. Justice Rogers made a motion to accept, and Justice Tennison seconded the motion. Justice Allison states she needs to amend the Public Service Committee minutes to reflect that Mr. Jowers does not live in the Valley View District, and based on the information given, candidates do not have to live within the district to be considered for membership at the discretion of the chief officers. With no other questions or comments, Judge Day called for a vote, and it passed unanimously.

Appropriation Ordinance for Local Law Enforcement Block Grant was read. Motion to bring to the floor was made by Justice Forrest and seconded by Justice Allison. With no questions or comments, Judge Day called for the roll to be taken. The Ordinance passed unanimously by all Justices.

First reading of an **Ordinance Calling and Setting a Date for a Special Election on the Question of the Issuance by the County of Sales and Use Tax Capital Improvement Bond**. The motion to bring it to the floor was made by Justice Rogers and seconded by Justice Pasmore. Judge Day opened the floor for any comments from Justices. Justice Cook asked why it was called a special election if it's going to be held November 5th. Judge Day responds that he couldn't say other than that's the way the attorneys wrote it. Justice Cook states he thinks we need some public input because what was read in the Public Service Committee sounds like it's 35 years of neglect on the

current building, because concrete block and metal does not wear out, mechanicals do, the flooding can be corrected, might cost 50-100,000 dollars but a lot cheaper than 100 million. There's a lot of ways to correct the flooding in a building and he doesn't know why it hasn't been addressed or done. The other maintenance issue that's been well-known for a long time has been the boiler system and other things needing fixed. What he worries about is he'll be dead in 35 years and if we spend 100 million dollars on a new jail and if it has the same kind of maintenance on it then there'll be somebody else replacing us. I personally think we ought to be looking at court systems and then add on, but we can let the voters decide. But if there is a maintenance issue, whoever has been in charge for 35 years has not done their job. It's as simple as that. It is easier to maintain than it is to replace.

Justice Cline asks out of own curiosity; I know this must go to the Department of Finance and the Treasurer but does this also have to go to the Attorney General for the approval for a ballot. Judge Day answered that he is not aware of, that would be the first he'd heard of it.

Justice Barnes states he likes the way the improvements are written in this because it gives us some flexibility. After attending the Public Service Committee meeting it does make sense to not hire an architect at the front end and incur those expenditures to then take to the public which they may not like as well. The only critique I have on the improvement section is it doesn't include anything on recidivism, and my concern is if the public approves this, and we don't address recidivism with something that's so profound like this measure would be if it is approved for 105 million dollars as a cap, then how soon are we going to be back in this position and how far are we kicking the can down the road on future overcrowding without addressing recidivism. That's my only feedback.

With no other comments or questions from the court, Judge Day then opened the floor to the public.

Justin Rolland, chief deputy at the sheriff's office, was asked to make comments regarding the maintenance practices and operations of the facility at this time. To comment about the maintenance, 32 years ago when I started working for the sheriff, the facility was nice. All the switches and jail locks were working, and I think back over the operations of the jail over the last 10 years, and all the things that Mike Miller has done for us. I know that Mike Miller puts a band-aid on something in the facility daily. I know that other agencies contact me weekly with dilapidated worn-out jails all over the state of Arkansas needing Mike Miller for help. From my personal viewpoint and being in the facility every day, the conditions of the building are deteriorating, and I do not believe it is over the misuse of the facility. Mike Miller takes very good care of the facility. There is no way to actually know what Mike Miller has saved the county and taxpayers annually over the years because of his maintenance abilities. I just hate to say that it's because it's not being taken care of, because he very well takes care of it.

Judge Day asked Chief Deputy Sheriff Rolland to tell the court what he does every day to help manage the facility. Chief Deputy Rolland stated that six years ago, when he became Chief Deputy, he was introduced to the fact that we had a growing overcrowding issue inside the jail. Six years ago, those briefings on overcrowding were brought to me bi-weekly, maybe weekly, maybe every two weeks. Jail staff would want to meet with him to go over the jail roster. In his first year as chief deputy it was relatively easy as they would have 375 inmates maybe 360, which is capacity, but the

norm back then was to see inmates sleeping on the floor in the hallways, or having to put them somewhere not necessarily secure, but he was used to seeing it because they were at capacity. Last week the jail was at 405 and he had absolutely nowhere to put anybody. So, his job now as chief deputy has gone from bi-weekly briefings to daily briefings every morning, and for the last 2-3 years that number has always been closer to 400 than not. He now must make the decision by going through the jail roster and determine who gets let out of jail today. It is not an easy decision on who to release, as it has become an everyday staff meeting vs every 2-3 weeks.

Justice Weinstock asked how many counties we take inmates from. Deputy Rolland estimates probably 15, not counting state prisoners.

Justice Longmire asked if the state criminal review board still comes in and how often? Judge Day answers annually and we get an annual report. Longmire then asked if we could get the last couple years of those reports provided to the Quorum Court for review to possibly get a better idea of what their recommendations might be for any type of issues that we have had with overcrowding or quality of facilities. Judge Day answered yes, and remember I bring those to you every year. Longmire thinks that would be helpful for all of us.

Justice Allison shares that in the Public Service Committee meeting we did talk about having a meeting out at the jail so we could tour the facilities and see what they actually look like. I want to see if that is a possibility for us. Judge Day answers yes, we need to talk to the sheriff about it and figure out a way to accommodate as I suspect we will have a decent amount of public there as well. Assuming we can figure out a way to logistically do that we would like to have a Quorum Court meeting out there. It has been 5-6 years since we've had a meeting out there and to tour the jail. That is my intention if we can get it worked out.

No ANNOUNCEMENTS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cleo Watkins, county resident, states he is for good roads, infrastructures and drainage. We have some drainage districts that are not doing their job. The State legislature left it up to the county judge to keep those corrected if he so desires. I want to ask my JP Steve Cline, how long it's been since you've ridden over our roads with the County Judge? Justice Cline answers not that long ago. Mr. Watkins states we need some help in the western district. It's easier to build roads in the eastern district because you have different soil. We have some drainage issues and different soil out in the western district, but we need some attention. Judge Day asks for specific examples. Mr. Watkins asked for the Judge and the road foreman to meet him at a specific location on 333 and it hasn't happened. Roads 333 and 348 are dangerous at the intersection. The traffic has increased on 333 and pulling out now on 348 is extremely dangerous. Road 307 that goes to Philadelphia Fire Department, has gone back to gravel and asked the court's intent. Judge Day answers remain gravel. Mr. Watkins asks why that would be and Judge Day answers not enough traffic, poorly built honestly, and should probably have never been paved in the first place. Well, I travel that road a lot, and the tree lines have grown up on the right of way at Crowley's Ridge. I am for better roads and public safety.

With no other comments, a motion to adjourn was made by Justice Williams and seconded by Justice Rogers. Judge Day took a vote and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:17 p.m.