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COUNTY & PROBATE COURT CLERK

QUORUM COURT MINUTES

OCTOBER 9, 2023

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

Invocation was led by Dustin Ichida, First Methodist Church, Jonesboro.

Assembly and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Justice Barnes.

12 Justices of the Peace were present, Justice Tennison was absent.

The first order of business was approval of Quorum Court minutes from September 25, 2023, and special Road Committee minutes. A motion to accept minutes as prepared was made by Justice Forrest and seconded by Justice Pasmore. Judge Day took a vote and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

The first item on the agenda was the second reading of **Ordinance to amend Ordinance 2021-21 and Ordinance 2022-9; updating the Craighead County Salary Administration Policy for merit increase procedures and approving authority.** A motion to suspend the rules and read by title only was made by Justice Allison and seconded by Justice Cook. Roll was called and it passed unanimously. Ordinance was read by title only.

Next item was the second reading of **Ordinance to amend Ordinance 2014-3, Ordinance 2021-41 and Ordinance 2022-3; updating the Craighead County Employment Policy to add Technology Resources Policy, declaring an emergency; and for other purposes.** A motion to suspend the rules and read by title only was made by Justice Barnes and seconded by Justice Cook. Roll was called and it passed unanimously. Ordinance was read by title only.

Next was a **Resolution Expressing the Willingness of Craighead County to Partner with the Arkansas Department of Transportation for the Following Improvements, Highway 230 Structure Replacements.** Motion to approve was made by Justice Cline and seconded by Justice Couch. Judge Day wanted to state that it is not uncommon for cities and counties to make a deal with the Highway Department and take a road. The City of Jonesboro has done it quite a bit, with South Culberhouse towards Craighead Forrest, and a lot of 141 north. Where you want the road built up you trade things, especially on the secondary road systems. Hwy 230 is part of that secondary road system. The Highway Department has asked Judge Day about that road and many others over the past few years, and at those times it didn't seem like a good enough deal for the county. A few months ago, they approached him about signing some court orders which is how the right of way was acquired for this project, and for each of those 5 circles, each there represents a bridge. We know Hwy 230 is as straight as a string, and they were going to build the new bridge adjacent to the old one and reroute traffic around it. So that straight road, 230, was now going to have 5 little whoop-de-dos in it and a lot of the property owners in the area and neighbors were unhappy. We heard about this second hand through the Highway Department. The Highway Department was about to bid these jobs out and pay a contractor the low bid price, and they have estimates of what they think it is, when I asked them if they would pay us to do that. What if we were to take that road and we were to build those bridges. We have a bridge department that does outstanding work. What if we could do that. I called their Chief of Planning and posed him that idea and he liked it. He ran some numbers and the 14.6 million dollars seemed like a good number for us. Judge Day's intentions are to use that to help partner with Brookland about a signal at Pine Log and partnering with Monette on a signal and then we've had a discussion going with Jonesboro and the Highway Department about improvements going out to Westside School. Judge Day thinks we could use this credit and we could partner with the cities, instead of paying the Highway Department for their share they could pay us, and we can take that part and put back into the Road Department to help us pay for these bridge improvements and we can move projects forward. I talked with the Mayor of Brookland last week and he believes his council is good and talked with the Mayor of Monette and believes his council is good and so just to be honest, this is a little unusual and the highway

department is really excited about it. It gives us the opportunity to do more projects and we have future things we're looking at. Having this credit, we don't have to take that out of our tax dollars. It will cost us less than a million dollars to do those bridges and it will develop 14.6 million in credit that we can then make other road improvements throughout the county. The Highway Department asked that you pass a Resolution to say it's okay for us to look at it and there's some details that I have to work out, and they would hold that money and I have to work details out with our county attorney and leg audit and whether it's permissible or not, so I am just asking that you approve this Resolution and give me the authority to work through the details and make the best deal I can for us.

Judge Day asks for other comments or questions on the Resolution.

Justice Longmire asks with this being a credit with a transfer and ARDOT, for future improvements to 230 how long would the credit be held. Judge Day answers until we spend it. Longmire also asks if there are restrictions they would have to approve on, or what projects they are willing to let us use that money on. Judge Day responds, I think in the Resolution the only detail is that it must be on a federal-aid road, and I have a map in my office that we would look at to see, any state highway is a federal aid road and I have a lot of county roads that are federal aid roads that we could do improvements to. It's more your main county roads, and those would fit in with that. County 745 for example is a main county road and a federal aid road. Longmire commented that most county roads that are black topped would pretty much be, and Judge Day responded, generally speaking.

Justice Cook asks with the 14-million credit that you're doing the 5 bridges on 230, who would pay for those 5 bridges 40 years from now. Judge Day answered, Craighead County. Justice Cook asks that for a 14-million-dollar credit we are going to take over 7 miles of highway from here on out. Judge Day responds, that's correct. Judge Day adds that one detail that he didn't express in his thought process was about time, value, and money. Saying it cost us a million to fix those bridges and you're speaking about 40 years from now. It's a number we can calculate with some obvious assumptions. On top of that, we know it costs us about \$10,000 per mile per year to maintain a paved road, so that's another \$70,000 a year for that 7-mile stretch of road that we kind of need to bank and think about. But even running those numbers, it's still advantageous to the county to do that.

Justice Cook comments on the back sheet of the handout, he's not understanding the 2 million for widening 49, Justice Longmire corrects, it's 91, and Justice Cook continues about the estimated non-federal local contribution. And asks if that's money out of the county, right. Judge Day responds, yes, that's some proposed projects that we would partner with the Highway Department to make the roads in Craighead County better, and we'd be getting it done, but they must have a partnering share or a non-federal match. So, in this particular case it doesn't say that, but that's 20%. It's a 10-million-dollar project that would be on the Highway Department's system but we're getting it improved for 2 million. Justice Cook asks if that will come out of the 14-million credit. Judge Day responds, yes sir.

Justice Weinstock asks if we have the people to do this. Judge Day responds yes, our bridge crew can handle that work and do the work sometime at the end of this year and first part of next year.

Justice Pasmore comments that road 230 is a good cut through from Brookland heading towards Lake City and a lot of farmers use that road. It gets traffic off other areas. If we keep the bridges up, it's probably even better than the state. Judge Day responds that seems to be the feedback he got from property owners and others that farm, when asking their thoughts if we were to do this. They were thrilled that we were going to leave the road straight and truthfully, because we weren't going to put the curves in the road and that we'd get it done quicker than the state highway department would. It's local control for them. If there is a problem, they feel like they can get the county to take care of it quicker than they could get the state, and that's not talking bad about the state, it's just how it is.

Justice Couch states that right now the bridges on 230 have weight limits and a lot of trucks going to Anheuser-Busch don't go across them because of the weight limits. Therefore, they drop down to Lester, and they come across Three Notch Rd and they destroy Three Notch. It's because of the bridges there are weight limits on 230, but

hopefully fixing the bridges will throw a lot of the tractor trailers filled with grain going to Anheuser back over, because 230 is a better right of way, better roadbed and been built better than Three Notch was. County has done a lot of work on Three Notch this year and it looks really good. In my mind Three Notch is not built for what goes across it, where we can take 230 and maybe we could end up locking that point across 230.

Justice Williams asked other than the five bridges, is the road in pretty decent shape. Judge Day answers yes sir, it is. Justice Williams also asks in a few years; can you see anything catastrophic happening there and needing repair. Judge Day doesn't think so. He has talked to the Highway Department and some farmers looking for local knowledge and all the feedback is that it's generally been a good road and looks pretty good today.

Justice Barnes asks on the Highway 91 project would our portion of it just be the contribution or would there be any work on that too by the county. Judge Day responds just the contribution. Justice Barnes asks if we'd have to wait for its completion by the state before we had access to the rest of those funds. Judge Day said no.

Justice Cline comments that the state has been trying for 8-10 years to force the counties to take roads like 230 and maintain them without giving any money, so to get the money is a big feat to begin with.

Justice Longmire asks for the estimated cost for the bridges. Judge Day guesses a million. Judge Day continues that he has been looking at our average cost, about \$60,000 a span to do that, and all in all about 10 spans across every one of them, you take that and a little transition and asphalt work, so somewhere in between a half million and a million is what I'm estimating.

Justice Cook asks per bridge. Judge Day says no, total. Justice Cook clarifies, for 5 bridges. Judge Day answers yes. The precast bridges, our inherited advantages over precast bridges we make are they can go the 80,000-pound load, we build them from scratch, and it's really efficient. We might have to trade them out every 40 yrs. instead of 100 yr. bridge but it works for us.

Justice Forrest asks are they estimating us 2.5 million per bridge. Judge Day responds, yes. I think the difference is they are moving them over, they're doing dirt work, making this long detour, and by following their highway policies they can't stop up a highway and detour you out on a county road. But if I make it a county road, I can detour you on a county road and make it work.

Justice Cook comments plus they make sidewalks. Justice Cook also asks to clarify that the school being built there won't affect the road, and Judge Day answers no.

Justice Allison asks if we have a crew working on this project do we have to pass on other projects to maintain other county roads throughout the time period. Judge Day says anything can change at any time, but right now our bridge crew is keeping up and we're not in bad shape, however all things could change tomorrow with an emergency. Right now, we have no bridges that are inherently dangerous that we need to work on, we are just doing routine maintenance. Justice Allison clarifies, so the 7 mile stretch you're proposing, you would shut down that stretch of road and divert traffic around. Judge Day responds at appropriate locations, as I don't think I would ever shut down the whole road.

Justice Weinstock asks who the Road Department would answer to. Judge Day answers, they would answer to me.

With no other questions or comments, Judge Day called for a vote, and it passed unanimously.

No **NEW BUSINESS**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Judge Day announces that Craighead County HR Lacey Rush's last day will be Friday, October 13, 2023, if anyone would like to see her.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robin Martin, 5005 Lamb Lane, Jonesboro, AR, concluded her conversation from the September 11, 2023, Quorum Court meeting, with regards to the American Library Association (ALA) and the Craighead County Library. She passed around information to the Court for viewing and hopes the Quorum Court will do some research and pass a resolution to keep the library from associating with the ALA.

With no other public comment, a motion to adjourn to committees was made by Justice Forrest and seconded by Justice Cook. Judge Day called for a vote, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:03pm.

Road Committee minutes
10/9/2023

Chairman Cline called the early road committee together at 5:00 PM. Those present were Justice Couch, Justice Barnes, Judge Day, and Road Superintendent John James. Judge Day and John gave an update on road work being done.

The committee reviewed a plat for Owen and Kelsie McDole, CR 353. Justice Barnes made a motion to approve, 2nd by Justice Couch. All were in favor.

Judge Day presented a Resolution expressing the willingness of Craighead County to partner with the Arkansas Department of Transportation for road improvements to be done by the county. Justice Couch made a motion to approve, 2nd by Justice Barnes. All were in favor and the Resolution will be heard at the full court meeting.

With no other business, Justice Couch made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Justice Barnes. All were in favor and the committee adjourned at 5:24 PM.

Finance Committee Minutes
October 9, 2023

Chairman Longmire called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:05 pm. Present were committee members Justice Pasmore, Justice Weinstock, Justice Cook, and Justice Forrest. Also present were Treasurer McNatt, Collector Eddington, and County Clerk Mary Dawn Marshall.

Collector Eddington presented the tax collection report for September 2023. Total taxes collected in September 2023 were up \$45,298 compared to September 2022. Many people are paying taxes online. Delinquent Real Estate taxes collected for the year are down 20.5% due to some tax payments being tied up in the court system.

Treasurer McNatt presented the September Treasurer reports. Balance in all funds on September 30, 2023, is over \$51 million. The General Fund ended the month with \$14.1 million, Capital Fund ended September with \$5.6 million, and the Road Fund had \$5.7 million. Sales tax was up 1.49% over September 2022, with \$2.445 million collected. The ½ cent sales tax report will disappear, as the State will receipt road revenues in turnback that the county receives. There is 44.785% of the budget left in 2023.

With no other business, Justice Cook made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Justice Forrest. All were in favor and the Finance Committee adjourned at 6:16 pm.