

Government Watch - County Commission

A look at what is happening in Bradley County

by Ashley Murphy

Several meetings were held during the month of May for the Bradley County Commission. There were many items on the agendas that needed to be reviewed and approved. Here are highlights from the Commission meetings for May 2009.

- At the May 5th voting session, County Engineer, Sandra Knight and County Attorney, Joe Byrd passed out a joint memorandum answering questions that arose in a Commission work session on April 27th regarding storm water permits and an illicit discharge that occurred into Little Chatata Creek.

A few residents spoke of concerns that Bradley County did nothing to regulate the spill. It was stated in the memorandum that Cleveland Utilities is regulated by an individual NPDES permit, Bradley

County is regulated by a general NPDES permit and the City of Cleveland is regulated under its own general small municipal separate storm water permit. Based on these permits and what they regulate for each entity, "any suggestion that Bradley County has a present duty to continually test all of the water bodies outside of new construction and until the proposed TMDL Protocols are approved is in error."

- A special called voting meeting was held on May 11th, immediately following the regular work session.

One of the topics of this special meeting was to discuss a budget amendment on the Legislative Administrator Position, currently held by Amy Moore. Due to frequent overtime, the money in the line item for the position was running low and over \$4,000 was needed in the line item bud-

get to finish out Moore's salary for this fiscal year.

Commissioner Mel Griffith made a substitute motion to send this issue to the finance committee, but the sub motion failed. The original motion to amend the budget by transferring money from the fund balance passed. Commissioner Ed Elkins commented that this is not a salary increase, it is just compensating for the hours Amy Moore has worked.

- During the May 18th meeting, Commissioner Louie Alford recognized Danny Lawson and the Bradley County EMS team for receiving the Star of Life Award. Mr. Lawson stated that the Erlanger Life Force was also a recipient. The Star of Life Award honors those who use their skills and services to save lives on a daily basis. Over the past 6 weeks, the Bradley County EMS has had 5 resuscitations.

- Commissioner Brian Smith made a motion for County Attorney Joe Byrd to proceed with contacting the litigation council to contest the City of Cleveland's action with the sales tax.

Also, in that motion would be an amendment to the County Attorney's budget for any additional hours and work put into this project. The motion passed unanimously.

- Commissioner Lisa Stanbery recognized the students at Bradley Central High School for receiving over \$1.6 million in scholarship money.

Bradley County Director of Schools, Johnny McDaniel, also recognized Walker Valley High School and their scholarship efforts. There were about 330 students that graduated from Walker Valley High School and 185 of those were Tennessee Hope Scholarship recipients.

- Commissioner Ed Elkins made a motion at the May 18th meeting to extend the notification deadline to the City regarding the fire contract.

The motion passed with Commissioner Thompson voting no and Commissioner Atchley opting to pass.

Commissioner Brian Smith then asked at the May 26th meeting if another motion to extend the notification out another two weeks could be put on the June 1st agenda. The motion will be voted on at the June 1st voting session.

- A lengthy discussion surrounded the topic of the fire merger between the City and the County. Many of the commissioners had questions and concerns, mostly about the county volunteer fire fighters, the fire tax for the residents if the county and city merge, and the length of the contract. Several of these ques-

tions could not be answered, but Amy Moore and Commissioner Connie Wilson said they would be working with the Fire Merger Committee and the City of Cleveland to work toward these answers.

- Commissioner Mark Hall recognized County Trustee, Mike Smith, at the May 26th meeting. The Tennessee Trustee Association named Mike Smith East Tennessee Trustee of the Year.

The Bradley County Commission meetings and committee meetings are open to the public each month.

Commission meetings are held in the Bradley County Courthouse. Their voting sessions are on the 1st Monday at 7pm and the 3rd Monday at 10am. Commission work sessions are on the 2nd Monday at 12pm and on the 4th Monday at 7pm. Committees meet as needed.

Government Watch - City Council

A look at what is happening in the City of Cleveland

by Tonya Brantley

Several important decisions were made by the Cleveland City Council at their meetings during the month of May. The following are highlights from those meetings.

- The Cleveland City Council heard from several residents voicing their concerns on a variety of topics. One resident, David Benton, addressed the council asking why they changed the speed limit on Georgetown Road to 30 mph. Benton said, "This issue is hurting everybody that travels that section of Georgetown Rd. When somebody does drive 30 mph, it results in tailgating and causes a lot more accidents." Benton believes that the 2.3 mile section of Georgetown Rd. that has the 30 mph speed limit is not in conformance with side streets and others in the area. Councilman David May requested a traffic study for Georgetown

Road. A follow-up report will be given in an upcoming meeting.

- A public hearing held during the May 26th voting meeting concerning an ordinance on the number of billboards in Cleveland received opposition from several residents as well. Lennox Hills resident, Christy Williams requested further study before the new billboard ordinance passed. She presented several pictures of billboards she had taken from around the Cleveland area. Williams and her husband spent about three hours one weekend counting billboards around the Cleveland area. They counted 148 structures on several main roads. 29 of those counted were vacant, 32 were double stacked billboards and 17 tri-vision billboards. Williams and several other residents attended a planning commission meeting in which the commission voted to ap-

prove this ordinance despite three people who spoke expressing their disapproval for it. She said, "It was a public hearing and yet, the public wasn't heard." Williams feels this ordinance is spot zoning disguised as an ordinance change. Resident Joe Sharp also voiced his concern about the ordinance stating, "Areas of scenic quality are being blocked by billboards. As I understand the proposed changes, this protection from visual clutter will not take place, but just the opposite. Is this proposed change necessary?" Councilwoman Bambi Hines commented saying, "Not one person I've spoken with is in favor of more billboards. I consider this as pollution. I'm not against a moratorium on billboards. I can't see adding any others." Community Development Director, Greg Thomas explained that the ordinance would make the distance requirements

larger between billboards increasing the radius from 150 feet to 400 feet. The council gave first approval to the ordinance.

- A public hearing to hear public comments concerning the proposed amendments to the 20 year growth plan by adding areas to the urban growth boundary around the City of Cleveland prompted a lengthy discussion from several residents in opposition to the proposal. Alan Dawson a resident of Bancroft Road opposed the amendment saying he was against it and that it would not benefit the residents in that area. Greg Thomas explained if there is to be a southern I-75 exit, Bancroft Rd would be the obvious location of that, saying in the future, as growth occurs, it could go in that direction. Thomas Oakley of Varnell Road asked the council what the plans are for annexation in that area and asked if this is just a formality for expan-

sion. Greg Thomas explained that there are no plans to annex at this time and that portions of Varnell road are already in the growth boundary. Thomas said, "We need to be preparing for industrial growth."

- Councilman Richard Banks made a motion to join what he said were four matters of common interest and put what he called a "global settlement" on the agenda for the council's next voting meeting to be held on June 8 at 4pm. His motion was to combine four items and come up with an agreement to resolve the fire merger, sales tax, Minnis Road property for the new county school and to form a task force to combine the county and the city planning departments.

Councilman Bill Estes said, "These are separate issues that need to be looked at separately." Councilman David May said he wasn't opposed to

putting the motion on the agenda but he also requested to have Councilman Banks put the motion on as four separate items to which Banks replied, "That would defeat the purpose." The motion to join all four separate items into one motion passed with Councilmen Bill Estes, Vice Mayor Avery Johnson and councilman David May voting no.

- The City Council unanimously passed resolution 2009-56 expressing the intent of the City of Cleveland to approve the affirmative action policy plan for equal employment opportunities prepared by MTAS and to approve the MTAS guide for ongoing efforts in the area of diversity.

Cleveland City Council meetings are open to the public each month at the Municipal Building on Church Street on the 2nd and 4th Monday with the work session at 2pm and the voting session at 4pm.