

Government Watch - County Commission

A look at what is happening in Bradley County

by Ashley Murphy

servicing the 2nd District on the Commission for the past 8 years and in those years, no tax increase has yet to occur. Wilson stated that this was probably one the most difficult budget years in her serving period, due to keeping a balanced budget, not raising taxes and not laying off employees. All of those reasons, according to Wilson, is why she will support this year's budget.

Commissioner Lisa Stanbery then expressed her concern for lack of policy following. The fund balance as is falls below the 10% set mark that the commission voted to put in place, creating a violation of policy.

Atchley responded saying that he believes the fund balance will even itself out in the next couple of weeks and will rest above the 10% mark. He went on to say that if it saves residents a tax increase and saves jobs, then he supports the presented budget and closed by adding, "Extraordinary

times call for extraordinary measures."

When it came time to vote on appropriations made to the Budget for FY 2010-2011, the motion passed with Commissioner Ed Elkins and Stanbery voting against the Budget.

Stanbery also voted against a motion to fix the tax levy. For fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010, the combined property tax rate for Bradley County shall be \$1.792 on each \$100 of taxable property. The revenue generated will be split between various county funds.

A motion to fix the tax levy of the county fire district passed unanimously for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010. The County Fire District now set at \$.3356 on each \$100 of taxable property located within the county, but outside of the Urban Fringe Fire District; and \$.4070 on each \$100 of taxable property located within the Urban Fringe Fire District.

The last item on the agenda drew several opponents when the commission shifted into a public meeting. Many residents came to oppose the rezoning of a plot of land on Blue Springs Lane from FAR to C-1 in order for a business to make appropriations.

Amber Allen, a resident of Blue Springs Lane, stated that it is a small community with several close-knit families on this portion of the extremely narrow dead-end road. She stated there had been a business in the vicinity before which had contaminated water and killed livestock. There is currently a small business located on the road that was grandfathered in when zoning was set in place, but Allen stated they are quiet and the residents don't mind them at all. However, she added that allowing another business to freely move in and have all commercial zoning privileges could hurt the community.

Several other residents came forward and expressed their concerns, as well, and stated their wishes to not have this zoning request approved. The motion to rezone failed, with Commissioner Mel Griffith voting for the rezoning.

Court Clerk Gayla Miller opened the July 13th meeting with a request to pass a resolution turning the duty of warrant writing over to the Bradley County Juvenile facilities. Miller stated that this is an action that needs to be done due to the time constraints on weekend writers and the amount they are being paid to do the job.

Weekend warrant writer's are on call from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon and receive \$100 for their work. Early in July, Miller had her weekend warrant writers quit due to an influx of calls. One man was sent out 23 times over the course of one Friday evening.

Miller stated she will be turning her budgeted funds

over to the Detention Center and letting their 19 employees take over the process. The Commission will vote on this resolution Monday, July 19th.

Commissioner Ed Elkins said he has received several questions from residents in his district regarding a price increase at the Bradley County Landfill for garbage drop-offs. Apparently, the price has been raised from \$2 for 5 bags to \$3 for 6 bags. Elkins stated that even with the increase, the revenue in the budget for this line item still remains the same and hasn't been brought up to reflect the raise.

Mayor D. Gary Davis stated that he was unaware of the price increase, as this is handled by SanTek Environmental, who run the landfill. Commissioner Ben Atchley, who is on the Landfill Committee stated that he would check with Cheryl Dunston.

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Government Watch - City Council

A look at what is happening in the City of Cleveland

by Jamie Ramirez

been open for about 12 years. He gave some insight on their dispatch with all county and city agents including all Bradley, Cleveland and Charleston police departments, fire and rescue and a number of other agencies. Wilson says they are very busy; calls have increased by 23.5%. They are so busy because the agencies they dispatch are also busy. They will dispatch up to 170,000 calls and take close to a quarter of a million telephone calls. They will have to expand even more. The equipment they use is state of the art, it's computer software driven; they have 18 servers in their back office and have about 50 laptops for both dispatch and the emergency management agency. They have a full time IT person on staff to take care of the computers along with members of the IT department of Cleveland Utilities to maintain the computers after hours. They have 17 active radio

channels, all compliant with FCC regulations for 2013.

"We're real big on training new employees," says Wilson. They had recently been training new dispatchers who will be done with training in about five weeks. After completing training, the new dispatchers will pair up with a trainer on the dispatch floor, and from that point it will take six to eight months before they can be turned loose...there's so much to learn. They have even managed to bring in speakers to talk about certain situations a dispatcher might be involved in, such as a shooting or hostage situation.

Tennessee was one of the first states to have 911 in all counties and is now one of the first to be Wireless Phase II compliant, meaning they are able to locate cell phones. They can locate it within about a city block. They have asked the FCC about having better means of finding a cell

phone's location than they have now. Tennessee ordered a contract to migrate the whole 911 system to an IP system, an Internet system. This will give better voice quality, more rerouting capabilities if there are breaks in the lines, and various other opportunities.

The next step is Next Generation 911 (NG911). This will happen when the system is IP implemented. Dispatch will be able to start taking calls through text message, Twitter, Facebook, iPad, etc. and will be able to send and receive images and video, maybe one day even communicate through American Sign Language.

Funding for 911 is through cell phone use, in the amount of \$1.50 billed through service providers to the individual. Local government also fund dispatchers in Tennessee.

Greg Thomas gave an update on the Strategic Plan stating that a lot of progress

has been made. There have been three meetings of the task force so far; one in January, one in April and one in June. The next meeting will be August 19, 2010. It will be held at Cleveland State Community College at 6:00 p.m. in the Foundation Room.

At 9:00 a.m. the following morning will be the next meeting of the Strategic Plan Task Force. Citizens are welcome to attend both these meetings. A handout given to the council members gives a history of the project. Right now the City of Cleveland is looking at growth opportunities with the new plants in the area; Volkswagen and the up and coming Whacker plant. At the April meeting, some background was presented on land use, transportation, public facilities and services, mapping, analyzing land use, and even interviewing all the service providers in the community.

"Three key numbers that

came out of that report were: 19,000 new jobs, 33,000 new population and 14,000 new households...the task from that point on became how best to allocate this growth throughout the community and what we want to achieve in that," stated Thomas. Some issues came out of that, one being growth pattern, land use and infrastructure linkage, and southern growth pressure. This is pressure in and around exit 20 for additional growth. Northern growth pressure, this is pressure at Exit 33 near the Whacker plant. "Issues relating to the development or re-development of Cleveland's urban core and its surrounding urban environment, another issue was housing in the neighborhood. The final issue was economic development and quality of life," continued Thomas.

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