

Garland County, Arkansas
Environmental Services, Public Works, and Buildings Committee
The Mahoney Building
210 Woodbine Street
Monday, August 21, 2023, at 5:30 PM
Minutes

Members present: Chairman Hunter, Vice-Chairman Jimmy Young, Justices McGrew, Brown, Braughton, Myers, and Bright.

Members absent: None

Also present: citizens, elected officials, staff, and media.

Chairman Hunter called the meeting to order, and Justice Dixon presented the invocation.

Chairman Hunter asked to discuss razing the county building at 236 Woodbine Street and building a parking lot. Judge Mahoney explained that the Extension Office has been moved out of the building and is now housed in the Mahoney Building. The building at 236 is not worth repairing, and the county would like to utilize the property as a parking lot for the Sheriff's vehicles and free up the parking lot across from the District Court. Justice Myers asked if the Sheriff supports the parking lot. Judge Mahoney said he has, and the Sheriff is happy with the arrangement. Justice Raney asked what the cost would be, and Judge Mahoney said he did not know at this time. He said the county will prepare a request for proposal. Justice Brown asked if the committee needed to move with an action, and Judge Mahoney said yes. He also indicated that a diseased tree on the lot will have to be removed. There was some discussion on landscaping. A motion to move forward with the plan was made by Justice Brown, seconded by Justice Braughton. With no further discussion, the motion passed without opposition.

Chairman Hunter asked to discuss rebuilding the 70 West Transfer Station at 2634 Airport Road. Judge Mahoney explained the need for the transfer station and the need to rebuild. There was some discussion on the new building, and plans were reviewed. Justice Young asked the cause of the fire. Judge Mahoney explained a lithium battery caused it. A motion to move forward with the rebuilding of the 70 West Transfer Station was made by Justice Brown and seconded by Justice Young. With no further discussion, the motion passed without opposition.

A member of the audience asked why the committee did not do the pledge, and Judge Mahoney explained it had been the practice of the Quorum Court to have the pledge during the Quorum Court meetings and not the committee meetings.

Chairman Hunter asked to discuss purchasing a building to house the Senior Citizens Program. Judge Mahoney indicated two operations partners were in the audience: Dr. Douglas Ross with CHI St. Vincent and Cathy Packard with the Oaklawn Center on Aging. Dr. Ross came forward to take questions and explain the need for the Senior Citizens Center in Hot Springs. He told about the operations, how the Hot Springs Village Center serves around 100 people, and how the

Meals on Wheels program serves over 400 meals to the community. He indicated the program helps seniors stay active and helps with their quality of life. He said these programs may be the only interaction some seniors may have each day. There was some discussion from the audience and concerns about rushing into the project, and Dr. Ross indicated this has been in the works for several years. Judge Mahoney went over the drawings of the proposed building and how it could fit the program. There were concerns regarding the city's plan to operate a homeless shelter across the road from the proposed building. There was also some concern about waiting to provide these services to the community. Justice Young spoke about the neighborhood if the homeless shelter is operated in the area. He read several articles with headlines on the homeless arrested. He voiced his concern for the senior's safety. Other citizens spoke on the available programs before the Hot Springs Center was closed. It was indicated what a need Garland County has for a senior citizens center in the city. There was a lot of discussion on the homeless and the lack of safety for our seniors if the city operates a homeless shelter. Justice Myers talked about the market and the listing of the property. Judge Mahoney explained that the city, county, and partners would need to put together an operating plan. He also talked about all the properties the county has looked at over the past few years. He talked about how social deprivation affects the seniors in our community. Dr. Ross talked about the CHI Emergency room safety and how the hospital makes that a priority. There was some additional discussion, and Dr. Ross indicated that he was not committed to operating it at this time. He said we are working on putting a plan together, and he is committed to the plan as it is today. There was some discussion on getting an operating plan in place for several years before buying a building. Chairman Hunter asked for a motion to move the purchase forward. There was not a motion made, so the motion died. Justice Raney spoke on the unintended consequences of doing nothing. Justice Myers said he did not hear anyone say they do not want a senior citizens center. They just don't want it next to a homeless shelter. He did not think that tabling the idea of a senior center was appropriate. He indicated it is not the best location and we should consider other options. Judge Mahoney challenged the committee to come up with some alternative locations. There was some other discussion.

Chairman Hunter asked for a discussion on the 911 Communication Center consolidation. Judge Mahoney went over the mandate to consolidate the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) in each county.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Ashmore, CPA". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Susan Ashmore, CPA
Garland County Comptroller