

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON COUNTY QUORUM COURT**

Tuesday, December 1, 2015  
5:30 p.m.

Washington County Quorum Court Room

2016 MAY 20 PM 4:07  
SECRETARY  
CO. & PROBATE CLERK  
WASHINGTON CO. AR

FILED

- 836.1 The Washington County Quorum Court met in special session on Tuesday, December 1, 2015. The meeting was called to order by County Judge Marilyn Edwards. She stated that the purpose of this meeting was to continue working on items pertaining to the 2016 budget process.
- 836.2 T. Lundstrum led the Quorum Court in prayer and in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 836.3 MEMBERS PRESENT: Daniel Balls, Harvey Bowman, Rick Cochran, Robert Dennis, Lisa Ecke, Ann Harbison, Sharon Lloyd, Tom Lundstrum, Eva Madison, Sue Madison, Joel Maxwell, Joe Patterson, Butch Pond, and Bill Ussery.
- 836.4 MEMBERS ABSENT: Gary McHenry.
- 836.5 OTHERS PRESENT: County Judge Marilyn Edwards, Chief of Staff George Butler, Treasurer Bobby Hill, Comptroller Cheryl Bolinger; Interested Citizens; and Members of the Press.
- 836.6 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: Judge Edwards asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.
- 836.7 **A. Harbison made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. S. Lloyd seconded. The motion passed unanimously by those present by voice vote. The agenda was adopted as presented.**
- 836.8 RE-PRESENTATION FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS AND DEPARTMENT HEADS OF 2016 BUDGETS: Judge Edwards stated that at this special meeting the Court will hear various information and statements by JPs, and hear comments from the department heads present tonight.
- 836.9 Judge Edwards stated at the Special Quorum Court meeting on September 10, 2015, her office distributed finance data for the 2016 budget to the court, complete with the projected revenue for 2016 and with the requested budgets from each of the elected officials and department heads. At that time, she asked questions for the JPs to consider regarding the budget process. She reported that the Court has had twelve meetings to date dedicated to the 2016 budget process, costing taxpayers a minimum of \$40,000, not to mention the hours of time the department heads and people of this county have spent away from their homes and families.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 2

- 837.1 Judge Edwards stated she asked the question that night, "What is the target reserve amount that the Quorum Court would like to see in the General Fund, why this amount, and how did the Court propose to achieve that target?" A clear complete answer was never received for this question. The second question was: "Was the Quorum Court going to recommend that operating budgets remain flat for 2016 or will any increase or decrease be proposed?" She stated the Quorum Court insisted on line item budget hearings and six meetings were held to do this, costing \$20,000 and only to get to the end of November with a motion to cut 2% across the board. Many of the departments present have already reduced its budgets to begin with and today is December 1<sup>st</sup> and the Court seems to be almost back to square one. Judge Edwards stated that Elected Officials and Department Heads are present tonight to address the Quorum Court on the motions made at the Special Quorum Court meeting that asked that the 2016 budgets in the General, Road and Jail Funds be reduced by 2%.
- 837.2 **B. Ussery made a motion to adopt the 2016 budget with one exception, which is that the Court move from the Road Department General Fund . . .**
- 837.3 **E. Madison called a point of order stating that the budget is not on the Court's agenda tonight so it cannot be voted on until notice of that is given to the public.**
- 837.4 County Attorney Steve Zega stated regardless if E. Madison's point of order is correct, the Court can suspend the rules by a 2/3rds motion and bring the budget off the table and put it on the agenda.
- 837.5 **B. Ussery made a motion to suspend the rules and bring the budget ordinance back off the table. R. Cochran seconded.**
- 837.6 **With no discussion, Judge Edwards called for a vote on the motion.**
- 837.7 **VOTING FOR: H. Bowman, R. Cochran, R. Dennis, L. Ecke, A. Harbison, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, J. Maxwell, J. Patterson, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. VOTING AGAINST: S. Lloyd. The motion passed with thirteen members voting in favor and one member voting against the motion. The budget ordinance was brought off the table.**
- 837.8 **B. Ussery made a motion that the Court adopt the original budget with the exception of moving \$558,198 from the Road Fund over into**

**the General Fund, making the unappropriated reserves in the General Fund \$6,000,001.**

- 838.1 S. Zega addressed B. Ussery stating that the Court needs to be very careful and clear about what funds are being discussed, so legal money is being put into a legal fund. He stated that the Court cannot take road funds and put them in the general fund, but there are general fund monies that are in the Road Department budget. He asked if his intent was to take \$558,198 out of the Road Department's General Fund revenue and move it into the Unappropriated Reserves for the General Fund, and B. Ussery stated that was his intent.
- 838.2 Judge Edwards asked whether it was coming out of the fuel line item or the general reserve; to which B. Ussery stated it is how the department juggles it in order to make it all legal, but that is where the savings and money from the Road Department is going to be.
- 838.3 T. Lundstrum stated he would like to get this budget passed, but unfortunately he does not agree with everything Judge Edwards stated in her opening statement. He believes that the Court did set a \$6 million reserve that was clearly wanted to accomplish and according to Comptroller Cheryl Bolinger the County is now at about \$5.5 million. With due respect to J. Maxwell, although he voted for the 2% reduction, he did not think it was going to affect the personnel side of the budget, which makes it excessive to begin with. He stated since the Court already took \$4 million out of last year's budget and people have cooperated and worked things back to where the County is in pretty good shape, he thinks this is asking too much. He stated that there are only 2-3 areas in the budget that he thinks can be reduced; that there is excessive money in the Election Commission budget that could be reduced, and he would not mind taking a look at the sales tax, though this could be done at a later date. He stated he will vote to pass this budget tonight and does not believe it is necessary to hear from every department head to get this accomplished and moved onto the whole Quorum Court with a do pass recommendation on the budget.
- 838.4 E. Madison stated she has been talking for some time about the percentage of the general fund one cent sales tax that the county gets with 40% of that going into the Road Fund.
- 838.5 **B. Pond called for a point of order.**
- 838.6 B. Pond explained that the Court is currently discussing B. Ussery's proposal made and that has nothing to do with the sales tax.

- 839.1 County Attorney stated that in broad terms, he believes E. Madison is discussing B. Ussery's proposal which was to pass the budget tonight.
- 839.2 **Judge Edwards ruled on the side of E. Madison.**
- 839.3 E. Madison continued stating that 40% of the county sales tax is \$2.6 million that is being taken from general purpose revenue and being put in the Road Fund. This has been done for years despite the fact that the Road Fund was infused with the statewide ½ cent sales tax share that the county gets, which is around \$1 million a year. She stated that the difference in where the County is in terms of projected revenue left in the general fund vs. the projected budgets in the general fund is a difference of about \$2 million. She noted that the Road fund is not even budgeting all of that revenue this year and are planning to leave over \$1 million in its own reserve. She stated that she does not believe it is necessary to take any money from any part of the Road Department budget, but the Court should take it from the reserve and actually take more of it. In doing so, she stated that the Court would eliminate the entire debate over the 2%; it would not have to worry about the personnel or commissioned offices; it could shift that money and it would not even alter the Road Department's budget. She noted the Road Department says that the money is being saved for possible bad weather, but it will be in the General Fund reserves for possible appropriation to the Road Department.
- 839.4 **E. Madison made an amendment to B. Ussery's motion that the Court move the Road Department's entire unappropriated reserves of \$1,029,290 from the Road Fund to the General Fund unappropriated reserves. S. Madison seconded.**
- 839.5 **B. Ussery stated he would not accept E. Madison's motion as a friendly amendment.**
- 839.6 R. Cochran stated that the change that the Court is considering with E. Madison's motion is not really set up as a percentage and seems to be of a one-time nature. He asked County Attorney S. Zega if he would recommend that the Court reestablish a percentage split so that as sales tax revenue comes in through the year that the Court apportion it between County General and Road as it goes through. S. Zega responded stating he did not believe that the Court could do that tonight or anytime in December and accomplish passing a budget, but it could for the future.
- 839.7 B. Pond stated that as noted by S. Zega, when the Court starts increasing the amount that is taken from the unappropriated reserves, it is possibly taking money away that was contributed for road work only; to which S.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 5

Zega responded that the Court can take the County's share of the one percent sales tax revenue and spend it on any legal purpose including roads. The Court can take any of the general millage and spend it on any legal purpose including roads; however, anything that is dedicated through the road millage is road money only.

- 840.1 B. Pond stated that the County has a couple bridges that have not been discussed on the court that there will have to be money for. He stated he will vote for B. Ussery's original motion if it eliminates the 2% cut across the board; however, he will vote against E. Madison's amendment.
- 840.2 A. Harbison stated that she is always concerned when the Court starts moving money out of the Road Department because it is actually separate from the General Fund. She stated that she likes B. Ussery's motion over E. Madison's, but everyone on this court needs to realize that the Court already has a road budget and if some of this money is moved out, then there is the possibility that it would have to be moved back in. Further, she stated the Court needs to remember that the ½ cent sales tax that is being received from the State sunsets after ten years and the County will only have that income coming in for another seven years. She stated when citizens voted for this sales tax, they voted on 60% for general and 40% for roads. She stated that she will not support E. Madison's motion, but will reluctantly support B. Ussery's motion.
- 840.3 Judge Edwards requested that Assistant Road Superintendent Charles Ward and Chief of Staff George Butler comment on the Court's current motions and discussion.
- 840.4 **S. Madison called for a point of order.**
- 840.5 S. Madison stated that she thought that the Court was discussing E. Madison's motion and is not sure under what protocol that these gentlemen were invited to speak.
- 840.6 Chief of Staff G. Butler responded to S. Madison stating during all of his years with the Quorum Court, the Court often invited particular department heads to speak during the middle of a meeting.
- 840.7 S. Zega stated that the JPs are all entitled to speak first if wanted, but he did not see anyone other than J. Maxwell raise his hand to speak. He further stated if the Court is taking \$1 million away from a department, it seems to him that those department heads ought to be allowed to talk about the impact of that on the department's budget.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 6

- 841.1 **Judge Edwards ruled that she would allow anyone in this public to speak because that is why everyone is there.**
- 841.2 J. Maxwell stated he will support E. Madison's motion because it gets the County away from the limited amount in reserves and does not cut into the Road Department's budget.
- 841.3 **J. Maxwell called for the question. S. Madison seconded.**
- 841.4 **Judge Edwards called for a vote on J. Maxwell's call for the question.**
- 841.5 **VOTED FOR: H. Bowman, R. Cochran, L. Ecke, S. Lloyd, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, J. Maxwell, and J. Patterson. VOTING AGAINST: R. Dennis, A. Harbison, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. **The motion failed with nine members voting for and five members voting against the motion. The call for the question failed.****
- 841.6 S. Madison stated that she believes E. Madison's motion is a very good solution to the quandary that the Court finds itself in. She stated that this year the Road Department has demonstrated to her that there is some reserve in its budget because of the situation with several bridges that had to be torn down and rebuilt. She stated this gives the County money to have in reserves that will be available for county use, including the Road Department should something arise. Therefore, she thinks this gives everyone a comfort level that the Court has been striving for throughout this budget process.
- 841.7 A. Harbison stated this is all county money and taxpayer money so it can be moved at any time. She thinks that the road money needs to stay as road money; however, she will be voting to move the \$558,000. She noted that should the Road Department ever need it, she will support moving it back into the road budget. She stated that the Court is just robbing Peter to pay Paul, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her district is county roads in the rural area.
- 841.8 J. Patterson stated that what sticks out to him is that there was a deal with the bridges this year which cost around \$900,000, but the Road Department had reserves to pay for it. He stated that he does not really see that the court would be taking it away so the Road Department could not get back to it if needed and does not see a problem as the Court has always come through on things when it needed to.
- 841.9 S. Zega responded to J. Patterson stating if the Court takes the reserves from the Road budget and puts in to General unappropriated reserves, the

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 7

Quorum Court would have to be the ones to give it back if the Road Department asked for it.

- 842.1 B. Ussery stated that the Road Department has the reserves because it is known that some things will come up. He stated that one thing that he is very strong on is that the departments need to have a long term plan and the County does have a long term plan for when an emergency comes up. He believes if the Court can pass the budget per his motion he thinks that everything will work the way it should. He stated because the Road Department has been wise enough to set this money aside, he thinks it is very shortsighted for the Court to take it away from that department and tell department heads that if they come back and need the money, then the Court will give it back.
- 842.2 H. Bowman stated that the Court seems to be forgetting the fact that a number of the County's department heads have made huge sacrifices in their budgets to help the county reach this goal and he does not see a big problem with moving reserves out when everyone knows that if the Road Department needs the money, then the Court will give it. He believes that E. Madison's proposal is completely appropriate and does not understand why it is taking moving earth and sky to get a decision like this made. He urged the court to put this to bed tonight and recognize the sacrifice that all of these departments have already made.
- 842.3 E. Madison stated that the Road Department's current revenue, if the Court left the 40% sales tax in, is just over \$10 million, which would be the projected revenue into the Road Fund. She stated that just shy of \$9 million was budgeted which leaves the \$1 million in unappropriated reserves, so she is confused by B. Ussery's statement that the Road Department has things that is being planned for. She stated that the Road's budget stays intact under her amendment, so anything that the Road Department planned for next year is still there. She stated that whether that money remains in the Road Fund or General Fund Reserves, if the Road Department wanted to dip into it, the Department heads would still have to come to the Quorum Court in order to spend it. She stated that if the Court moves the \$1 million to the General Fund's Unappropriated Reserves, the Road Department would be in the exact same position that it is in now, but it just frees up the money for anyone else in the County who might need it.
- 842.4 S. Zega responded to E. Madison stating that for the Road Department to spend money out of a line item other than what was appropriated would require an appropriation ordinance that the Quorum Court would have to approve.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 8

- 843.1 B. Pond stated he was a little hesitant to go along with B. Ussery's proposal because the Court would be taking money that the Road Department has been very careful to keep on hand for disasters and/or bridges that will need repairs, etc. He stated that it is not just the Road Department who will be watching what the Court is doing, but every other department will be watching it and by doing this the Court will be creating an atmosphere that causes the department heads and elected officials to believe that they had better spend the rest of their money before the end of the year and he does not want to see Washington County come to that.
- 843.2 **A. Harbison called for the question. E. Madison seconded.**
- 843.3 **Judge Edwards called for a vote on A. Harbison's call for the question.**
- 843.4 **VOTED FOR: H. Bowman, R. Cochran, L. Ecke, S. Lloyd, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, J. Maxwell, and J. Patterson. VOTING AGAINST: R. Dennis, A. Harbison, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. **The motion failed with nine members voting for and five members voting against the motion. The call for the question failed.****
- 843.5 R. Dennis thanked all the department managers who had worked through all of this and applauds them on the great job that they did on their budgets. He stated he believes the reason he voted against the call for the question is that he wants to hear from the Road Department just in case something different needed to be said other than what the court has said.
- 843.6 A. Harbison concurred stating she would also like to hear from the Road Department.
- 843.7 **E. Madison made a motion to suspend the rules and allow public comment. R. Cochran seconded. The motion passed unanimously by those present by voice vote.**
- 843.8 Judge Edwards stated that she would now open the floor to public comments.
- 843.9 Chief of Staff George Butler addressed the Quorum Court introducing Charles Ward, the new Assistant Road Superintendent. He stated he realizes this is not a huge budget cut, but it is a huge cut in the percentage of money that the Road Department gets. He stated that the way this will have to be accomplished is to reduce the sales tax money going into the

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 9

Road Fund and right now the Road Department is getting 40% and asked what that percentage would be with these two proposals.

- 844.1 Comptroller C. Bolinger responded to G. Butler stating that with E. Madison's proposal, the Road Department would be getting more like 24% to 25%; and with B. Ussery's proposal, it would receive about 31%.
- 844.2 G. Butler stated this is a step down a dangerous road for several reasons, noting that even though the Road Department can request money back, that money is going to be in the General Fund Reserves and is up for grabs for anyone else that has a crisis. He stated he believes once the Court does this and get used to having it, the Road Department will never get it back. He stated there is a resistance to changing the millage rate despite every reason in the world to do that; the General Fund will get used to having this money; and priority over that money will continue to slide and the Road Department will never get it back. Therefore, he sees it as a permanent cut and believes that the Road Department will have to fight for it in times of need. He noted that in the past, particularly in times of crisis, and after the rollback lawsuit when the county had some lean years, the Road Department has taken a cut and received much less than 40%; however, it always went back up. He pointed out that fuel prices will go back up, it is just a question of when and this will affect many departments in the county and that money will be up for grabs for everybody.
- 844.3 Assistant Road Superintendent Charles Ward addressed the Quorum Court stating his biggest concern is when fuel prices go back up, the Road Department will have to come back and ask for money because it has shown three years in a row that nearly \$1 million has been spent in fuel.
- 844.4 L. Ecke asked if this was a one-time transfer or if money will be transferred every year; and is the Court changing the tax percentage that the Road Department and County General gets.
- 844.5 S. Zega stated his understanding of the way E. Madison worded her motion is it had nothing to do with percentages, but she worded it in terms of dollars. He further stated that everyone will be back in this budget process again next year, so he Court will have the opportunity to revisit these numbers. He stated not to discount G. Butler's statement at all and his perception of the cultural and political side of this, but the law is that it is a one-time move of \$1,029,290 from Road Department reserves to General Fund reserves.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 10

- 845.1 L. Ecke stated as a one-time transfer, is it not addressing the percentage of the one cent sales tax that the County splits with the Road Department; to which S. Zega responded that the Court is not addressing a percentage formula at this time.
- 845.2 G. Butler stated despite how E. Madison stated in her motion, this would require an adjustment of the amount of money that the Road Department is getting and C. Bolinger would tell the Court that she will not just move Road money over to the General Fund, but will have to reduce the amount of revenue that the Road Department is getting from 40% to make the arithmetic work, so it is a reduction. He stated that his prediction is once this is done, come next year this will not change and he believes that E. Madison intends for this to be permanent.
- 845.3 H. Bowman stated that the Court needs to remember that the whole purpose of this process has been to reverse the situation that has been had in the County where every year more money is being spent than received in tax revenue. He stated that last year the County exceeded revenue by about \$4 million and this year it will exceed revenue by about \$2 million. He stated that this is an attempt to rebuild the County's reserves which have been reduced to a dangerously low level to the point that the County might not be able to take care of any emergencies that come along. He believes to say that the Court will not use good judgment to replace money in the Road or bridge fund is a slap in the JPs face because they are responsible people trying to use the county's money appropriately and properly. He stated that the Court is moving money out of one pocket into another that is still available to be used however the Court deems necessary and as adults everyone should be able to realize that and put this thing to bed.
- 845.4 A. Harbison questioned if the Court was voting on whether to move \$558,000 or \$1,029,290 from the Road Fund and everyone has agreed that something is going to have to be moved because department heads cannot be expected to take a 2% cut across the board. She stated anyway that the Court moves it, it is going to be a percentage of the sales tax, because Cheryl Bolinger has to work out the percentage to make the numbers work; so the Court will either leave 31% or 34% to 35%.
- 845.5 T. Lundstrum stated unless the Court actually pass an ordinance to change the percentage for the tax distribution, it will still be 60/40%. C. Bolinger is just using a percentage to figure the money.
- 845.6 **With no further discussion, Judge Edwards called for a vote on E. Madison's amendment motion to reduce the Road Department**

**General Reserve by \$1,029,290 and place it in the General Fund Reserve.**

- 846.1 **VOTING FOR:** H. Bowman, R. Cochran, L. Ecke, S. Lloyd, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, and J. Patterson. **VOTING AGAINST:** R. Dennis, A. Harbison, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. **The motion passed with eight members voting in favor and five members voting against.**
- 846.2 **AN ORDINANCE RECOGNIZING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE EXPENDITURES IN EACH FUND FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY, ARKANSAS, FOR THE YEAR 2016 AND ADOPTING A BUDGET FOR THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS REFLECTING THE LINE ITEM EXPENDITURES THEREOF:** R. Cochran introduced **An Ordinance Recognizing Revenues And Appropriating Monies For The Expenditures In Each Fund For Washington County, Arkansas, For The Year 2016 And Adopting a Budget For The Various Departments Reflecting The Line Item Expenditures Thereof,** and County Attorney Steve Zega read the ordinance.
- 846.3 **R. Cochran made a motion to adopt the budget ordinance. E. Madison seconded.**
- 846.4 B. Ussery stated he will vote to adopt this ordinance, because it is time to move on; however, he thinks the Court could have done a better job of respecting others and all of the effort that went into this budget. He thinks the message that the Court is sending is if you work hard and pigeon-hole money away for a future time, then the Court will come in, steal it, and give it to people who do not work as hard.
- 846.5 R. Cochran thanked everyone for the hard work in putting the budgets together, stating if the budget had come to a \$6 million reserve, he believes this would have passed several meetings ago. He noted the one thing that the Court did in this budget that he really does not like is it has kicked the can down the road for employee benefits as far as salaries. This has to be one of the Court's prime focuses early in the budget process next year.
- 846.6 A. Harbison stated if the Court does not do something about revenue, then it will be in the same situation that it is in right now. She stated the people of this county need to make it known that they want good services in the county, but do not need all the bells and whistles. She concurred with R. Cochran, stating the Court needs to provide its employees descent salaries instead of bonuses.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 12

- 847.1 B. Pond stated before he reluctantly votes in favor of this ordinance, he wants to compliment the Road Department and County Judge for being careful with the Departments' money and having this reserve on hand, so the Quorum Court could steal it to balance another budget.
- 847.2 H. Bowman responded to the comment that the Court is setting up a situation where the other offices will be trying to spend all of the money before the year is over, stating that he believes the County has good, solid representatives in this Courthouse that are taking care of the money. He has seen several offices return money to the County General fund without a lot of harassment; because those department heads understand the financial stress the County is in. He thanked the people who have made major sacrifices in their budgets to make it possible for the Court to balance and put this county back on solid financial footing.
- 847.3 L. Ecke stated that she knows the 2% reduction hit a lot of department elected officials like a slap in the face. She stated that she was under the assumption that it was just operational budgets and not personal services that would be cut, but after talking to several department heads, she wants to apologize that that was the Court's sentiment. She stated that this hand will not be used to slap you in the face, but rather be open to work with everyone to make Washington County the best county in the state. She stated that the County has to be competitive with Benton County; and the only way to remain competitive is if it has the same revenue structure. The elected officials have the confidence of the public who voted them into office and trusts them to run their departments just as the Quorum Court trusts them. It should not be her telling those officials how to run their department and she will not.
- 847.4 J. Patterson stated that the Court put capital expenses back into the budget this year with a lot of vehicles for the Sheriff, so it is headed in the right direction. He pointed out over the past seven years, the County has had some hard times with a lot of projects and an ice storm and much of that was already dedicated when Judge Edwards took office, so it has not been easy for anyone.
- 847.5 Judge Edwards stated she knows her Road Department has taken the full blow of this and that it is gracious about it, so she is hopeful that the other departments are appreciative of what the Road Department has done for them this year.
- 847.6 CITIZEN COMMENTS: Sheriff Helder stated that this has been an odd budget cycle for everyone and concurred with L. Ecke that suggesting a 2% reduction across the board was a slap in the face; however, follow-up

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 13

conversations have led him to believe that it was intended one way and taken another. He is truly sorry that the Road Department is losing the \$1 million, but thanked everyone at the Road Department for getting the other County employees to this point. He stated that everyone finds themselves three years into these severe cuts, which have been about as severe they could get without talking about personnel layoffs; to which he hopes the County never gets to that point. He hopes that it is recognized that the County is on bare bones and if it requires this court to make a tough decision as it has required of the various departments over the last three years, then that the Court members could actually revisit that millage discussion. He asked the Court to consider it, because he can speak on behalf of the other departments in saying that the County cannot continue in this downward cycle. He stated that his heart is that the employees are the County's most important resources and he was thankful to hear that bonuses were even on the table. However, he was disappointed that the Court took a percentage bonus and turned it into the same amount across the board where one of his 6-month employees will get the same amount as his 20-year employees. He pleaded that the Court will quit doing patchwork in this area and get up to speed with the employee benefits and pay, because in cities and counties all around them, employees are getting pay raises and merit increases and he is slowly losing his employees to these places. He urged the Court to put this in the front of the budget discussions next year, stating that he knows the JP's hearts are in the right place.

- 848.1 A. Harbison stated that the county employees need to thank County Clerk Becky Lewallen for the money she put into the pot so the Court could give everyone the bonuses, along with all county officials who have helped and stepped up when they have had extra funds to share with the county.
- 848.2 E. Madison thanked Sheriff Helder for his positive remarks, because this has been a very trying process for everyone and she is grateful that everyone went along on the roller coaster ride.
- 848.3 T. Lundstrum stated that the former County Treasurer, Roger Haney, used to preach that the County needed to have three months reserves, which is where the concept comes from, and three months reserves is \$15 million, not \$6 million.
- 848.4 Christy Weaver addressed the Quorum Court stating that she is there as a concerned citizen having attended four meetings over the last couple months, and questioned why the millage rate was cut in the first place and why it cannot be raised to get the County's budget turned around?

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 14

- 849.1 County Attorney Steve Zega stated when it comes to the question of the millage; it is set in November by law for the year until the next November.
- 849.2 T. Lundstrum responded to Ms. Weaver stating he was the one who made the motion to reduce the millage by  $\frac{1}{2}$  mills and the explicit reason he did it was because the County had \$18 million in reserves. Revenue was stronger than it is now, and it was clear in his mind that people were overtaxed; and that tax reduction passed unanimously on the Quorum Court. He personally believes that the County is getting more money on property tax than before the millage was cut, because appraisals have gone up. He stated that property taxes are high and brings in an estimated \$600 million through this court, with the majority going to schools and the county receiving a small percentage.
- 849.3 A. Harbison addressed Ms. Weaver stating that she voted for the reduction in millage and wishes she had not have, but at the time she felt like she was out on a limb that was being sawed off and that she would be pictured as someone in favor of taxes. She stated that Roger Haney warned the Court what was going to happen and it has happened, so the Court is going to have to bite the bullet and determine a reasonable amount of taxation to run this county efficiently.
- 849.4 E. Madison stated that there are probably different answers from every JP voting for the millage decrease and it is not even the current JPs who voted on that. She thought that .5 might be a little too much and pushed for an amendment to make it  $\frac{1}{4}$  mills instead to moderate and that failed. Periodically over the years, the court has reduced the millage because of the increase in property values and the increase in number of parcels being appraised. She stated that levels it out for the taxpayer, because as the property value increases, the Court can lessen the blow a little bit by reducing the millage, which is not a huge loss of income to the county because of the increased value overall.
- 849.5 R. Dennis stated that he made a motion to raise the millage back to where it was and this court voted no and with that it could have given the 2% increase in salaries as well as a bonus. He stated perhaps next year he will bring it forward and it will pass.
- 849.6 B. Pond thanked Ms. Weaver for coming forward and stated he was one of the JPs who voted to decrease the millage, but there were people on the court who would have come back and voted to replace it before the County got in the kind of mess that it is in now. He stated he is not sorry that he voted for the cut, because there was a lot of money in reserve, but apologizes that there is not enough people on the court to vote to bring the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mill back.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 15

- 850.1 **H. Bowman called for the question. S. Madison seconded.**
- 850.2 **Judge Edwards called for a vote on the call for the question.**
- 850.3 **VOTING FOR: H. Bowman, R. Cochran, R. Dennis, L. Ecke, A. Harbison, S. Lloyd, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, J. Patterson, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. The motion passed unanimously by those present.**
- 850.4 **With no further discussion, Judge Edwards called for a vote on the motion to adopt the budget ordinance.**
- 850.5 **VOTING FOR: H. Bowman, R. Cochran, R. Dennis, L. Ecke, A. Harbison, S. Lloyd, T. Lundstrum, E. Madison, S. Madison, J. Patterson, B. Pond, B. Ussery, and D. Balls. The motion passed unanimously by those present. The ordinance was adopted.**
- ORDINANCE NO. 2015-95, BOOK NO. 10, PAGE NO. 356**
- 850.6 S. Madison stated she is somewhat disappointed with the turn the Court took tonight, noting it was at the end of its rope at the last meeting in trying to get to the goal of greater reserves. She stated she supported J. Maxwell's motion to let those who knew their budgets best to figure out where they might make some cuts; and perhaps it was a larger number that anyone wanted to deal with. She stated that the reaction was somewhat troubling to her with people threatening to close offices, etc. and she worried that the Court did not have a chance to hear from the diligent, hardworking people who sat down and went through the budgets again. The Court will never know what those people might have come up with to save more money, and she wants to express her gratitude to those people.
- 850.7 J. Patterson stated that this is not an easy job and it takes a lot of thought to enter into the decisions that they may be making for future court members.
- 850.8 Juliet Richey, Washington County Planning Director, addressed the Quorum Court stating for the most part until the last statement by S. Madison, she heard some of the most positive things that she has heard all year as far as looking forward to next year and solving some of the issues on the table for the county. As a department head of a small department, she has worked for Washington County for almost 11 years and feels like she has some familiarity in what happens in some departments in the county.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 16

- 851.1 J. Richey stated a couple months ago she typed something she planned to present at some point during the budget process. As Planning Director for the county having worked for the county for 11 years, she stated that Washington County has been a wonderful place to work and she truly enjoys the people that she works with every day. She feels like the Planning Office, as well as many other offices in the county, provide a needed service to the citizens of Washington County that truly make the community better and a safer place to live and work. She stated to be a part of something larger than her that directly affects the lives of those around her and her own children, is a thing of amazement to her on a regular basis and it makes her proud to work as an integral part of the community in which she lives. One of the things she enjoys most is working interdepartmentally with many of the other departments of the county on a daily basis, including the County Fire Marshall, Road Department, Environmental Affairs Office, County Attorney, County Public Utilities Coordinator, 9-1-1 and Addressing Office, Department of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Office and IT Department literally on a daily to weekly basis. She considers the supervisors and department heads of these departments and agencies to be some of the best, most service-minded, honest and self-sacrificing people that she has ever known. She stated that most people are diligent managers of the budgets and money, ever cognizant of the fact that the money comes directly from the taxpayers themselves. As with every organization there are likely to be exceptions to this, but not in the people that she works with on a routine basis. She tells her job applicants that while the pay may not be as high as other jobs, if they take this job they will work with some of the best people that they will ever meet. She is so proud of the services that are above and beyond many counties in Arkansas and is part of what makes Washington County a leader and desirable place to live, work and have a business. She stated those services cost money and they serve a large population that continues to grow. Those services are already becoming more pressured and the need for additional capital expenditures and personnel are greater this year than they were the year before and will continue to become greater as they serve more people.
- 851.2 J. Richey stated over the past 1½ years she feels like a dark cloud has descended over the county with personal attacks, fingers pointed, accusations made, and legal actions with many people hurt on all sides and in her opinion, a large plummet in the morale as many of the employees of this great county. She has seen people she knows without a doubt to be fine people attacked and spoken to with a lack of respect that filled her with a feeling of sadness and dread. She understands that there is a finite amount of money to provide services and she has no doubt that this is a very understandable concept to everyone with who she

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 17

works. As a whole, she stated that the Court is more than willing to make cuts that get the employees through the lean, hard years and forego capital expenditures for several years. However, as has been stated tonight, this is not a sustainable model if everyone is to continue to provide the level of services that have been provided for many years in this county. Are those services that they provide to county citizens those things that the court feels are expendable no matter what and if so, she asked them to name those services? She asked if the future diminishment of those services which are part of what makes a community a great place to live, work and thrive worth dismissing the idea of a millage reinstatement, because that is what she feels the Court is looking at long-term. Cutting the ability to provide quality services needed by the community will ultimately deter the great quality of people that the Court has enjoyed for many years from working at the county and as it has been said many times, the employees are the greatest assets of the county. If the quality of people that the County is able to attract due to the opportunity to be able to do one's job well diminishes, then in the long run she fears will be a large negative impact on the County. She stated that the incentives that has been have given at the Sheriff's Department in order to keep quality people on the force would benefit other departments in the county, and she hopes that the Court can work together next year and thereafter to find a way to meet those needs, which do not all have to be monetary.

852.1 J. Richey stated that she does have respect for the job that the Quorum Court is required to do, primarily approval of the budgets, which requires weighing many things in the decision making. She asked that the Court consider in the future the long-term effects that its funding decisions make and more ways than just solving the budget for each year as it comes. She feels sometimes some of the other long-term impacts like employee morale and looking forward to how departments can train people and keep quality employees gets lost in the immediacy of balancing the numbers in front of the Court members for the current year only.

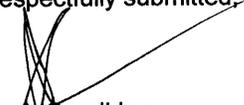
852.2 B. Ussery stated that the Court has had some very trying times over the last few months and he believes it failed to remember that as elected officials on this court, they are called to be servant leaders; they are called to serve the people of the county and called to lead the workers of the county. Leadership by its very nature demands that the Court give direction. He believes that the Court has failed to do that, and he is going to do everything he can in the coming year to see that it gives direction. He stated he had no idea that the Court was aiming for \$6 million in reserves and if he had, that number would have hit a long time ago. He

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
Washington County Quorum Court  
December 1, 2015  
Page 18

stated he has worked successfully in business for 35 years and in order for it to be successful; the biggest thing that can possibly be done is to build a coalition. The Court's job is not to make friends, but to lead and have the people that it is leading to follow. Secondly, he stated if what the Court is saying is going to make somebody mad, uncooperative, or demeaned, then it needs to rethink what is going to be said. He stated to bring a 2% reduction in there without having a clue what it really means is not right.

853.1 ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Cary Sandidge  
Quorum Court Coordinator/Reporter