

DEKALB COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

August 8, 2023

The following Council Members were present:

President Richard Ring
Vice President David Yarde
Member William VanWye
Member Robert E. Krafft
Member Amy Demske
Member Amy Prosser
Member Rick Collins

Others present: Auditor Susan Sleeper
Attorney Donald J Stuckey

David Yarde opened the meeting with prayer at 8:34 a.m.

MATTER OF MINUTES

David Yarde made a motion to approve minutes dated July 11, 2023. Amy Prosser seconded and all approved.

MATTER OF ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS

William VanWye made a motion to approve the Health Departments additional in the amount of \$65,797 within the Heath Fund 1159, broken down as follows: \$18,797 Part-time RN (10760), \$23,500 Assistant County Nurse (11463), and \$23,500 County Nurse (11461). Amy Prosser seconded and all approved.

MATTER OF TRANSFERS

David Yarde made a motion to approve the Sheriff's transfer of \$20,000 from Care of Inmates (34190) to Repair & Maintenance Supplies (22310) with in the County General Fund (1001). Robert Krafft seconded and all approved.

Rick Collins made a motion to approve the Prosecutor's transfer of \$2,000 from Legal Secretary (11514) to Deposition (33110) and \$3,600 from Legal Secretary (11514) to Travel/Training/Education (34295) with in the County General Fund (1001). Amy Demske seconded and all approved.

Keith Flesher asked why there is a need for additional money if the departments provide to the Council what they need prior to the Budget Year. Rick Ring explained this is not an additional request and it is a 'rule' required by SBOA.

Robert Krafft made a motion to approve the Commissioners transfer of \$2,000 from Administrative Funds (31024) to CPR Certification Cards (22735) within the LITED Fund (1112). William VanWye seconded and all approved.

Additional discussion took place with the public on additional vs. transfers.

Rick Collins made a motion to approve the Health Departments transfer of \$280.00 from other service fees (32780) to Manuals (22740) within the Lead Grant (8952). William VanWye seconded and all approved.

Amy Demske made a motion to approve DCCC's transfer of \$9,877 from Director of Intervention (11420) to Food Supplies (22250), \$25,000 from Director of Intervention (11420) to Utilities (33540), and \$15,000 from Director of Intervention (11420) to Equipment Rental (33710) within the CC State Grant Fund (9121). Robert Krafft seconded and all approved.

MATTER OF DCCC 2024 BUDGET UPDATE

Michelle explained that instead of receiving a small increase Statewide, there was nearly a \$2 million reduction in funding.

MATTER OF FINANCIAL REPORT BY FUND

The Council certified that they have received and reviewed the July 2023 Financial Report by Fund.

MATTER OF DEKALB COUNTY AIRPORT UPDATE

Council and Commissioner Brief 8/8/2023

New Business

- RWY 9/27 will be closed from July 31 through September 22 2023. This is three weeks longer than initially planned. The contractor struggled with the specification for the stone density and moisture and that put them almost a month behind. We are working hard to make up that time. Currently we have electricians working, along with paving operations.
- The Self-Serve Fuel System installation has stalled as we wait for backordered components and for AEP to make the three-phase drop. We now expect both the second week of August. We should have a fully functioning self-serve AvGas system by the time the Runway reopens.
- The Sweet Aviation Cirrus Service Center has been staying extremely busy. The Board has allowed them to shorten their hours during the RWY closure but they are offering a no-charge callout until 9:00pm.
- Even though RWY 27 has been closed and RWY 9 has been shortened and closed with 15-minute prior permission we have been fairly busy. Traffic is holding at about half of what it was prior to the start of construction.

Old Business

➤ None.

MATTER OF COMMISSIONER-COUNCIL DISCUSSION

SEA 4 Opt-in: Commissioner Watson announced that by unanimous vote the Commissioners voted to 'opt-in' to the new SEA 4 funding for 2024.

Highway Deficit Projections: Councilman Ring explained that the highway is funded by the gas tax and the Community Crossings Grants that are received, money is NOT taken out of the general fund, the health fund, or any other fund in the County.

Commissioner Watson, with the help of Ben Parker, Highway Superintendent and Brad Stump there were two proposals shown for the amount of highway funds that would be needed in order to fund all of the highway needs and reconstruct/repair 66.83 miles rated 1-2-3-4 and convert 2 miles per year of gravel to chip and seal; all dependent on the time span for completion chosen. The proposals also included the projected fund deficit for 2025 from the Council's Financial Advisor, reduced funding in the Commissioners LITED dollars, annual maintenance shortfall and contingency for the CR 56 project. Proposal #1 was \$1,830,530 per year needed with a 5-year time span. Proposal #2 was \$457,633 per year needed with a 20-year time span.

Councilman Krafft clarified if the Commissioners LITED Fund would be short for 2024.

Councilman Ring asked what timeframe the Commissioners are wanting to accomplish the updating of roads and if there is a standard on how many houses need to be in a mile to qualify for pavement, or at least some type of standard to be fair across the board. Councilman Ring asked Ben if the need for more vehicles and employees should be considered at this time as well. Ben feels they need to consider those no matter what, as they are always behind on equipment replacement, etc. Depending on how much of the work the Commissioners want to keep in house will depend on the need, as of now most of the work will be contracted out. Councilman Ring also explained that if the Wheel Tax is implemented that the Cities and Towns will also receive revenue to improve their roads as well. Council member Prosser asked Ben how far \$2.5 million would get him if we taxed every single vehicle at the highest rate. Ben explained that he should be around \$4 million for road maintenance but is currently around \$3 million.

Councilman Yarde wanted to mention that several counties that already have a wheel tax are now looking at adding additional funds and he doesn't want to see this happen in DeKalb County. Ben explained that no matter what decisions are made today, the maintenance costs will increase as more roads are converted, this is not a one size fits all there are so many different parameters that have to be considered. Commissioner Watson explained the proposals are just a snap shot of the possible need. Council member Prosser asked if this decision had to be made today as there is a committee formed at the State to report to the Counties by January 1, 2024 on road funding. Commissioner Watson wanted to make it known that he does not like increasing taxes or taxes at all, but the safety of the roads, public safety and law enforcement is the largest responsibility that the county needs to furnish in regards to services.

Ring told the room that yesterday at the Commissioners Meeting, that Sanderson brought up the fact that this tax is the most reasonable one to have because all the money comes back to our county. Ring also explained that if we want to start bringing money in the decision would need

to be made by September 1, 2023. If we hold off and pass the decision by September 1, 2024, then the funding would start January 1, 2025, but not immediately.

Keith Flesher: He empathized the Council's position on how to spend the taxpayer's money on how to operate the County. But, there are taxpayers in the County that have limited income and many have already received increased assessment on their homes. He asked who and why there is limits on where the money can come from in the different funds, is that a State decision or a Local decision. He also feels that when a tax is imposed or increased it never seems to go away or reduce. He feels the wheel tax will be an additional burden for the County and its residents. He is all in favor of having good roads, as he is a car collector, but he doesn't feel a wheel tax is the answer and is just a band aid on a problem that will always be inevitable? He appreciated the great questions raised by the Council, but feels we can get more and there has to be a better way.

Greg Rice CR 64/Auburn City: Car collector and has many vehicles that are not all plated and road drivable, as well as he has 3 cars in Florida that are plated from Indiana, is he going to have to pay for vehicles that are not driven? He also feels there needs to be an exception for those car collectors.

Jerry Muzzillo: How many millions of dollars can be brought in and said a lot of roads could be done for \$2.5 million. And he hopes the old cars are exempted.

Leonard McCollough: Feels we have a lot of people that come to our County as we are rich in heritage and feels something needs to be done about the collector cars. One issue he has is that DeKalb County has such a high tax that there are not many other counties more than DeKalb and says if Todd Sanderson was here he could show how the property taxes have increased along with the sales tax.

John Pontius: Business owner and resident for 50 years. He is a little apprehensive on enacting the tax as he is just shy of 50 plates that he has in DeKalb County. What happens for fleets that aren't used anymore, what happens to the farmers? He also purchases a lot of gas in DeKalb County and feels that he is already paying his share. He does feel that Historical plates should have an exception.

Sid Meyer: Trucks have not been discussed as there are lots of overloaded trucks that are ruining the roads. Somehow there should be a way to get money back from some of the Companies that are using roads they are not supposed to and being overweight.

Rick explained the gas tax in the fuel price goes to the state and then is sent back on a percentage basis. The percentage is based on road miles and population. There are two portions to this tax: excise and surtax.

Jacob Walker: Farm mostly in the northeast part of County. Several things he has noted: property tax increases and this is not the arena to discuss that in, but wanted to mention the point. Just looking at the Wheel Tax, discussion on the heavy trucks – if we want DeKalb County to grow then we will have trucks. It is not possible for the Council to make everyone in attendance happy, it just isn't possible but feels this is the best example of user tax and is in favor of this tax.

Jim Miller: Northern DeKalb County Farmer had sent correspondence to the Board and tried to explain the differences of farm equipment/vehicles. He has sympathy for the Board with the decisions before them. He wanted to be sure there were not any questions on his email and appreciates the efforts the Board has put forth on whatever decision is made. He does mimic Mr. Walker on the farm vehicles

Brad Stump: Works for BF&S and is a DeKalb County Resident. Historic Car plates do have the ability to set a rate. He has 8 vehicles himself and would be happy to pay \$100 per vehicle to have better roads. His father was a police officer and said there were many times his response time was slowed down due to the conditions of the road. The damage done on the roads by heavy trucks would equate to 19 passenger cars. This will not solve the problem, he understands this was referred to as a band aid, but this process is going to take many shovelfuls and this is just one small step or shovel to help fix the problem. The Assessed Value was mentioned and that is for pay 2024, which does not mean the property tax bills will increase, but it may not be as bad as what everyone is expecting. How did we get to where we are now, is from kicking the can down the road for the last 30 years. At some point there will be a time that a decision has to be made. He explained that nobody wants to make a decision that will make them look bad publicly or privately, but when you sign up to run as an Elected Official you are making the decision that you will make decisions that will not always make everyone happy, it will be a decision that is best for the County that you are representing.

Dave Holt: Have heard from historical vehicle owners, farmers, etc. Told the Council that they are in a tough position because no matter what the State will shove it down our throat at some point, so the wheel tax will happen. He also wants to know how do we replace this tax, has that been looked at? He feels enacting the wheel tax now, is a preemptive decision to an ongoing problem.

Sarah Delbecq: Agrees with everything already said on all the different topics. For her, it is seeing the math and how everything plays out. When she is able to see that then she understands and sees the need for the decision for our roads.

Ring explained the average growth quotient usually if figured on a formula with historical values, but for the next two years the rate is set at 4% per the State. Ring then asked to apply a few examples to the Excise/Surtax Calculation sheet to show the Council/Public what money would be generated in total for residential vehicles. Councilman VanWye voiced concern regarding the rates with farm vehicles, and spoke about those particular vehicles only being on the roads 10% of the year. Councilwoman Prosser spoke regarding surrounding counties as she compiled a spreadsheet of what each collected. Prosser interjected that she is not sure she feels prepared to decide today. VanWye asked if we could approve the ordinance today, and then regroup and amend the ordinance at next week's Council meeting. Discussion took place, and Councilwoman Demske confirmed that the Council would have to make a unanimous decision to suspend the rules and vote on the ordinance on the 2nd and 3rd readings at this meeting in order for the ordinance to be submitted to the State by September 1, 2023.

Amy Prosser made a motion to pass a wheel tax with one caveat, that the taxes the citizens would pay are offset by eliminating new tax abatements for the next 5 years. Motion died for lack of a second.

William VanWye made a motion to move on with the wheel tax to see what plan is created and see where to the changes are next week. Motion died for lack of a second.

Dave Yarde explained that a tax increase coming for the new Jail is going to be mandated. He feels they have received a lot of information and that they have been asked to vote on a plan that isn't really ready and it is a disservice to the Council and all the taxpayers. Robert Krafft agrees that we are moving too fast and it will hurt but he feels we need to wait. Rick Ring brought up the fact that this topic has been brought up for the last 14 months and this is getting kicked down the road again and that is unfortunate. He is disappointed that none of the other Council Members have moved forward on this topic. Rick will have the topic on the agenda so that it does not get forgotten. Had Rick not pushed the Commissioners for a plan, without Ben and Brad the information we have today would not have been made available. This is back in the Commissioners ball park to present a plan. Amy Demske wanted to thank Ben and Brad for all the information and feels there is so much information to receive and doesn't feel all pieces are ready to be voted on.

Terry Hines: Is disappointed that the Council cannot even make a decision to move forward with a wheel tax. She listened to all the concerns and none of them said absolutely do not enact a wheel tax, just not to overcharge certain areas.

Keith Flesher: Appreciates everyone's tough job with the decisions they have to make and knows that everyone has constituents and wants everyone to just ask what they want. He feels the Council didn't know the numbers or what they wanted to do, ask the public what they want to see. He wants the Council to work the way it is supposed to work and ask the public what they want. Rick Collins said he did do that, he went out and asked what people wanted and the number one thing was roads.

David Yarde asked Commissioner Watson about the Auburn Drive railroad crossing and how hazardous it is and wanted to see if the Commissioners would be able to put any pressure on CSX before there ends up being an accident.

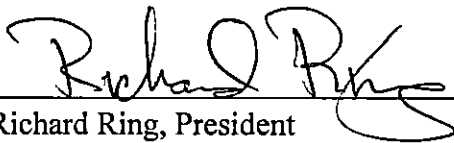
MATTER OF COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Reminder: 2024 Budget presentations on August 16th beginning at 9:00 a.m.

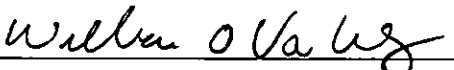
MATTER OF ADJOURNMENT

Rick Collins made a motion to adjourn at 12:02 p.m. Amy Prosser seconded and all approved.

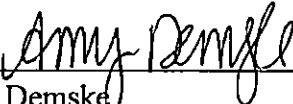
DEKALB COUNTY COUNCIL:

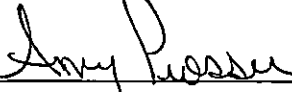

Richard Ring, President

absent
David Yarde, Vice President


William VanWye

absent
Robert E. Krafft


Amy Demske


Amy Prosser

absent
Rick Collins

ATTEST:


Susan Sleeper, DeKalb County Auditor