

WORKSHOP
PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held a workshop on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. in the Courthouse, Main Courtroom, at 16001 Barnesville Street, Zebulon. Chairman Briar Johnson convened the meeting and Commissioners Tim Daniel, Tim Guy, Jason Proctor and James Jenkins attended. County Manager Brandon Rogers, County Attorney Rob Morton and County Clerk Angela Blount were also present. (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e) (2)).

- 1. CALL TO ORDERChairman Briar Johnson**
- 2. INVOCATION.....Silent Invocation**
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.....Chairman Briar Johnson**
- 4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - (O.C.G A. 50-14-1 (e) (1))**

County Attorney Rob Morton noted he will need to leave the meeting early to attend an interview with the Department of Revenue performance committee regarding the Tax Assessors.

Motion/second by Commissioners Proctor/Daniel to approve the agenda, motion carried 5-0.

5. NEW BUSINESS: WORKSHOP

- Marie Broder – District Attorney

Marie Broder addressed the Board introducing her office staff in Pike County, Ms. Broder – District Attorney, David Studdard – Chief Assistant District Attorney, Michael Rogers – Senior Assistant District Attorney, Kate Lenhard – Senior Assistant District Attorney, Ashton Jordon – Senior Assistant District Attorney and Lilly Nickels – Assistant District Attorney. The Support Staff includes Investigator Rick Reeves - part time from Upson County, Victim Advocate Sherri Winslett, and Administrative Assistant Heather Flynn. The county percentages for Pike County’s crime is at 5% with 272 open cases that includes felonies, misdemeanors, probation revocations and juvenile cases. Pike County has the lowest percentage in the circuit with Spalding County at 44% with 3,143 open cases, Fayette at 31% with 2,258 open cases and Upson at 20% with 1,455 open cases. The current caseload in 2024 biggest case type is felony drug with next being misdemeanor. Marie Broder advised everyone to keep their doors locked. Lock your cars and lock your house. The District Attorney’s office has many duties and responsibilities. They prosecute death penalty cases through first appeal, prosecute indigent non-death penalty cases in Superior and Juvenile Court through first appeal, prosecute non-indigent non-death penalty cases in Superior and Juvenile Court through first appeal, attend and advise Grand Juries, draft indictments, accusations and Grand Jury presentments, prepare and file relevant and necessary motions in Superior Court, attend Superior Court when it is in session, work with victims of crime by advising them as to the criminal justice process, prepare orders for Superior Court Judges, file and prosecute civil drug asset forfeiture cases, administratively collect welfare fraud repayments, advise and train law enforcement officials, assist in collection of court ordered restitution for victims, attend Child Abuse Protocol Child Fatality Review Committee, Truancy Prevention Protocol Meetings, Truancy Referral Conferences, Multi-disciplinary Team Reviews, and Sexual Assault Team Reviews, screen out potential criminal cases prior to arrest/warrant, procure attendance of out of state witnesses and assist other states with procuring witnesses from this state, verify revenue bond issue petitions, assist crime victims with State Crime Victim Compensation applications, handle Habeas Corpus Cases and Appeals, Respond to Open Records Request and Handle Detainers and Extraditions. In contrast, the Circuit Wide Public Defender’s Office, which also receives money from Pike County, has the following duties: defend a portion of indigent non-death penalty cases in Superior and Juvenile Court (a significant percentage of these are conflicted out), handle a portion of appeals (they allege they were ineffective in most trials, and conflict out most of their appeals), respond to open records requests, request and serve defense subpoenas, participate in accountability court staffing and court, and defend juvenile delinquency cases. The Public Defender’s Office handles a fraction of the responsibility shouldered by the District Attorney’s Office. Some challenges of the District Attorney ‘s Office in Pike County include security in the Courthouse (security at the door), space in the office and the need of a full-time investigator to adequately prepare for trials. There is an increase in property crime in Pike County with the rise in population and starting to see gang crime.

Presentations by Constitutional/Elected Officers
(10 minutes each) Start time 11:30 a.m.

- Sheriff Jimmy Thomas – Sheriff’s Office, Jail, Inmate Care, E-911

Sheriff Jimmy Thomas addressed the Board stating they already have in place some things that they want to see in the future. Pike County has been blessed and as the county grows, there will be an increase in crime. People will never stop traveling Highway 19, Highway 18, Highway 109 and Highway 362, there will be a gang member that travels one of these roads. The county will deal with some gang activity because it is transit and will move around the county. But as far as formalized gang groups are concerned, the county is not seeing that. People that are moving in the county support the officials because they are trying to move away from the gangs. Sheriff Thomas complimented the Commissioners, County Manager, County Attorney, and the Staff for the relationship they have built. Sheriff Thomas noted when he picks up the phone and calls one of them, they would rather answer or call you right back. The one problem over the last 24 years is

there has been no planning except adding on to the Courthouse. Sheriff Thomas noted this Board of Commissioners has a vision, and that vision is that they have purchased some land and elected to have a steering committee. The county is moving forward. The two biggest issues facing the county today in the Sheriff's Department are traffic issues and an increase of computer fraud and bank transactions.

- Pam Thompson – Superior Court Clerk

Pam Thompson addressed the Board stating she is asking for salary increases for her employees. Ms. Thompson would like to see the Courthouse maintained better to include painting, cleaning the carpet and the grounds. The Courthouse is in the center of Zebulon and would like to see it kept up.

- Judge Ginny Blakeney – Probate Court

Judge Ginny Blakeney addressed the Board stating Probate Court is the preservation of the people. Probate Court handles weapons carry licenses, traffic citations, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage licenses, adult guardianships, minor guardianships, and fireworks permits. The Probate Court currently has one full-time employee besides the Judge and that employee has been with Pike County for 25 years and does an excellent job. Judge Blakeney would like to add a full-time employee to help alleviate the responsibility that is currently on the Chief Clerk. Judge Blakeney has an employee who is willing to step up and take on some of the duties. Probate Court will be utilizing the office upstairs in the Courthouse to expand. Chairman Johnson asked what the Orders to Apprehend are. Judge Blakeney replied it is mental health, rather they are a threat to themselves or other people, but they have not created a crime. Probate will determine if an officer needs to intervene to transport them to a facility for examination/evaluation.

- Donna Chapman – Tax Commissioner

Donna Chapman addressed the Board stating the county is now over 91% in collected taxes and 99.6% for year 2022 for real and personal property. A big change in the Tax Commissioners office is supplies. The office received new printers last year, and the printer cartridges are more expensive for the new printer. Mrs. Chapman has requested to add a part-time employee in the Tax Commissioners office.

- Judge Marcia Callaway-Ingram – Magistrate Court

Judge Marcia Callaway-Ingram addressed the Board they are a wonderful Board to work with. Judge Callaway-Ingram noted she does not have big changes this year. Magistrate handles criminal and civil cases as well as the local county ordinances. Judge Callaway-Ingram is asking for a salary increase for her Staff. Judge-Callaway Ingram asked the Board to help correct her terms of service with the county, she has completed three terms, and she is starting her fourth term.

- Terrell Moody – Coroner

Terrell Moody addressed the Board thanking them for everything. The coroner's office is not asking for anything in this budget and has no budget increase. County Manager Brandon Rogers stated that he and Mr. Moody have had some conversations about House Bill 625 This legislation requires a base minimum salary for coroners in all Georgia counties, likely increasing the county coroner's annual pay. While minimum salaries, will be set in law, the bill no longer requires that coroners receive death investigation fees. Additionally, coroners shall be provided the same county employment benefits as other constitutional officers if they, or their predecessor, spent at least 2,080 hours working on their coroner duties and the county had at least 75 coroner cases in the preceding calendar year. Lastly, the death investigation fee for deputy coroners will increase from \$175.00 to \$250.00, per case, and all deputy coroners will receive a \$100.00 per diem for each day that they do not work a case for up to 90 days (or \$9,000.00) per year. All of this becomes effective on July 1, 2024. CM Rogers noted this may have an influence on the coroner's budget if passed.

Lunch Break – 1:00 p.m.

(Lunch will be provided to the Board of Commissioners)

Department Head Presentations

(10 minutes each) Start time 1:45 p.m.

- Todd Goolsby – Public Works

Todd Goolsby addressed the Board stating there are no major increases in the Public Works budget just slight increases. Public Works has 22 out of 25 positions filled, there are three vacant positions. Heather Bell has taken over the administration for Public Works and is doing a good job. The shop positions have been filled. The daily work orders are being caught up on. Mr. Goolsby noted his guys work hard and if there is anything they can do to improve to please let him know. Mr. Goolsby stated he does not know where the county is at with the salary study, but it needs to be completed. It is hard to compete with surrounding counties on salary. Public Works requested budget is a \$3,674.00 increase from last year. County Manager Brandon Rogers noted Public Works is the second largest department in the county with the Sheriff's Department being the largest. A lot of debt was paid off last year on the equipment which helped the Public Works budget for this year to be lower.

- Ken Lulamiere – Building and Grounds

Ken Lulamiere addressed the Board stating Chestnut Oaks/County Extension Office budgeted money between Fiscal Year 2022-2023 and Fiscal Year 2023-2024 was \$636,590.00. As of to date the money spent is \$340,000.00 and projected \$236,590.00 to finish the project, bringing the cost to build the building to \$576,590.00. The money received from the Board of Education was \$415,000.00 and One Georgia Grant was \$8,310.00. The projected money returned is \$60,000. The total cost to Pike County Citizens is \$153,280.00. The cost per square foot including parking lot and furnishings is \$96.00 sq ft. That is unheard of this day in time. The total cost to the county is \$1,218,000.00, and money saved by Building and Grounds is \$641,410.00. County Manager Brandon Rogers noted years ago an agreement had been made with the Board of Education that the county would get the building they are currently in for the county's in-kind services, when that deal did not work out, the Board of Education owed the county money for the projects the county had provided in exchange for the building. The money the Board of Education paid the county was put into Chestnut Oaks building.

The Fiscal Year 2024-2025 proposed projects include the Senior Center kitchen appliances and commercial vent hood estimated cost of \$20,000.00. The Senior Center is applying for the Southern Rivers grant to help purchase kitchen appliances. If not awarded the grant, the funds are available.

The Building and Grounds budget includes \$3,500.00 for a generator service contract for a year. This contract services all the generators at the Fire Stations and EOC twice a year.

One new air unit is included in the budget at \$8,000.00. The air units in the county are old and one is always going out. Last year, the county spent \$14,760.00 in heating/air repairs.

\$4,000.00 has been included in the budget for carpet cleaning.

The Courthouse stairs need new carpet, \$3,000.00 has been included in the budget to have the carpet replaced.

The Blackmon Road Fire Station is included at \$200,000.00. The building has already been paid for, \$40,000.00.

\$5,000.00 has been included in the budget to move the Registrar's Office to the Old Extension Office. Some walls will have to be moved, doors replaced and paint.

The landscape contract that the Board approved last year is increasing. In Fiscal Year 2022 the county paid \$41,000.00, Fiscal Year 2023 the county paid \$50,000.00, Fiscal Year 2024 the county paid \$48,500.00 for landscaping. The landscape company has requested an additional \$500.00 a month due to inflation, for Fiscal Year 2025 the proposed cost to the county for landscaping would be \$54,500.00. Mr. Lulamiere noted it is still cheaper than hiring a full-time employee and gave an example of one full-time person at \$17.00/ hour is \$35,360.00 plus benefits at \$20,000.00 is \$55,360.00. Then mower service, supplies, parts, gas for vehicle and mower, straw, etc. would be an estimate of \$9,000.00/ year bringing it to a grand total of \$63,360.00.

Mr. Lulamiere noted his employees are underpaid compared to other similar counties. He is thankful for cost-of-living raises if that is what the Board agrees to give but he is going to fight for his employees and ask for a \$2.00/ hour raise for his three employees. That would cost the county only \$4,160.00 a year for each employee.

- Bobby Wilkerson – Fire Department

Chief Bobby Wilkerson addressed the Board thanking them for their condolences in the passing of his mother. Chief Wilkerson noted it has been almost three years now since he stepped into the role of Fire Chief. In the year 2021, the Fire Department answered 639 calls, in year 2022 the Fire Department answered 1,127 calls and in year 2023 the Fire Department answered 1,730 calls. When Chief Bobby Wilkerson started in Pike County, there were 28 volunteers. Pike County now has 65 volunteers with 25 of them being paid part-time firemen with Pike County. Out of the 25 paid part-time firemen, 24 of them are Pike County residents. Pike County has highly qualified firemen who work a full-time firefighter job in another county. The paid part-time firemen work two personnel per shift that is 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., seven days a week. The Fire Department budget increase is mainly personnel. Chief Wilkerson noted it is time to cover the time slot of 6:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. A third of the 1,730 calls are from 6:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m. where the county is lacking. Chief Wilkerson stated the Fire Department is ready to take the next step of filling the night shift. The call volume is here. The Fire Department budget also reflects funding for vehicles and equipment. Chairman Johnson stated he appreciates the 12-hour shifts but is there a time when the Fire Department will go from a 24-hour shift on and 48-hour off. Chief Wilkerson stated the 12-hour shift Pike County has been unique and it allows for firefighters to work their full-time job. There is a waiting list to be a part-time fireman with Pike County. The part-time employees like the 12-hour shifts and they have their insurance with their full-time job. Chief Wilkerson noted the Fire Department is ready if they want a couple of employees to do a 24-hour shift, all the employees will stay at a part-time status rather they worked 24 hours or 12 hours, they will work less days in a week to keep the part-time status. Commissioner Daniel noted if he had to explain a tax increase to his constituents, this would warrant a tax increase.

- Jeremy Gilbert – Planning and Development

Jeremy Gilbert addressed the Board stating his budget stayed the same except standard increase in insurance. Mr. Gilbert wanted to talk about Cost-of-Living Adjustments, COLAs. The State of Georgia is giving a 4% cost of living raise to state employees. Outside of School Teachers they are giving them \$2,500 this year. If you are a state law enforcement officer, you are getting a \$3,000

raise. If you are an elected official, you are getting a \$2,000 raise. The Federal Government approved a 5.2% COLA for the year 2024. If you are on social security, you will receive a 3.2% cost of living raise for the year 2024. Other jurisdictions that Mr. Gilbert tried researching had not adopted a COLA for this year because their budget year is July 1 – June 30. The City of Atlanta has adopted their budget, and they gave their employees a 3.5% cost-of-living raise. It is necessary for Pike County to do a pay study to see that the employees are where they need to be and setting into place the COLAs. Mr. Gilbert noted he tells his employees that he will fight for them. The County Manager does have a COLA figure in the budget, but Mr. Gilbert encourages the Board to look into what the state and other places are doing to make sure Pike County is compatible. The employees will feel appreciated, and it will show them Pike County is moving forward. It is not always the money aspect of it. Chairman Johnson asked what it will cost to do a salary study. Mr. Gilbert replied that the cost to do the study is a fraction of the cost that the implantation of the study could cost. Mr. Gilbert noted it could cost anywhere from \$35,000.00- \$100,000.00. County Manager Brandon Rogers noted the Board has previously been provided with two different quotes to do a salary study. One study was around \$25,000.00 and one was at \$30,000.00. The cost of the study is affordable for the county. It would be the implantation after the study is complete. County Manager Rogers stated this budget includes a salary study.

- David Neyhart – Registrars Office

David Neyhart addressed the Board stating he is asking for another position in his office to help in the office. The election cycle from May – November is going to get more intense and there will have to be more people in the precincts. There is an increase in the poll workers requested in the budget. Commissioner Proctor asked Mr. Neyhart what they thought about moving the Registrar's Office to the old Extension Office, if it would be accommodating for his office. Mr. Neyhart replied they will have more room, but it is chopped up on the inside. Mr. Neyhart noted he has heard the church would like to purchase that building and if they do want to purchase it, instead of moving the Registrar's office twice, take the money from the sale of the building and build the Registrar's Office something like the Community Center that was built at the Parks and Recreation. Mr. Neyhart noted if the county could find somewhere for advance voting to take place, the Registrar's Office could use their current office for another five years. Mr. Neyhart suggested talking to the Recreation Department and see if the Registrar's Office and the Recreation Department could come to an agreement to use the room at the Community Center and the equipment be secured.

- Tanya Perkins – Animal Control

Tanya Perkins addressed the Board stating in year 2021 fines attributed to Animal Control violations was \$5,533.45, in year 2022 fines attributed to Animal Control violations was \$7,741.19, in year 2023 fines attributed to Animal Control violations was \$8,535.67 and to date in year 2024 fines attributed to Animal Control violations is \$600.00. There have been 48 citations issued since January 1, 2024, totaling \$5,700.00 plus the fine amount the judge sets for the interference citation. In the year 2021 there was 1 impound, owner claimed and paid \$80.00 in impound fees. In the year 2022, there was 1 impound that was a stray that no one claimed. In the year 2023, there were 6 impounds; one owner claimed and paid \$10.00 (dog was only in the facility for one day), one owner claimed and paid \$100.00 in impound fees, one dog was a stray, and three that were court order impounds/euthanasia with owner paid \$390.00 in impound fees and \$315.00 in euthanasia fees totaling \$815.00. Mrs. Perkins stated the only increase in her budget is salary increases.

- Baylynn Strader/Helen Carter – Library

Baylynn Strader, Library Manager, addressed the Board stating the summer reading program was finalized yesterday which starts June 1, 2024. Once a month the library hosts a LEGO competition. Mrs. Strader stated the library has a lot of things going on and to expect big changes in the library. Mrs. Helen Carter addressed the Board regarding the budget for the library. The library budget for Fiscal Year 2024 – 2025 has an increase in the amount of \$10,677.00 from last year with most of the increase being operational expenses. Mrs. Carter noted that she has been discussing the budget with the County Manager Brandon Rogers. The books are paid for out of Impact Fees. Mrs. Carter stated all the programs at the library are all literacy based.

- Lavetrece Walker – Senior Center

Lavetrece Walker addressed the Board with a recap of the Senior Center. In July 2023, the Senior Center went fishing at Tyus Park and went on a quality-of-life trip to Roses in Griffin then out to eat for lunch. In August 2023, the Senior Center went fishing and went on a quality-of-life trip to Wal-Mart. In September 2023, the Seniors enjoyed a movie day at the library, and had a class on mental health. An 80-year-old member was choking at the Senior Center and Lavetrece performed the Heimlich on the member, and she is happy and healthy. Since this incident, three employees at the Senior Center have received their CPR training. In October 2023, the Seniors took a quality-of-life trip to Gordon State College, had a fraud education class taught by United Bank and took a quality-of-life trip to Blue Ridge to pick apples. In November 2023, the Seniors visited the Heritage Park Veterans Museum, had nutrition talks with Three Rivers, took a quality-of-life trip to Roses and then lunch at Gordon College. The Senior Center scored a 100 on Health Departments Food Inspection. In December 2023, the Seniors took a quality-of-life trip to Upson County Senior Center and visited Heritage Inn in Barnesville, GA. In January 2024, the Seniors took a quality-of-life trip to Wal-Mart. In February 2024, the Seniors received AARP Tax Aide free service, took a quality-of-life trip to Tubman Museum in Macon, and went shopping at Roses and lunch at Gordon College. In March 2024 the Seniors had a joint health and wellness class. In April 2024,

the Seniors will be visiting the Biblical History Center. The Allie Bankston Edwards Senior Center serves around 1,300 meals per month. \$65,800.00 of Three Rivers Region program funding cut due to Covid funding running out by July 2025. Lavetrece Walker applied for a grant through Southern Rivers in hopes to get a stove and freezer. The Senior Center serves 65 meals to Seniors with 35-home bound. When Mrs. Walker first started, there were about 14 Seniors using the Senior Center and now they have about 30 Seniors who come to the center every day. The Senior Center is growing and there are people on the waiting list. Commissioner Proctor asked what the age requirement was to attend the center and Mrs. Walker replied 60 plus and live in Pike County. County Manager Brandon Rogers stated that he and Lavetrece have been talking because there was rumor that Upson County, where the Senior Center gets their meals from, was going to increase the costs from \$7.25 to \$12.00-\$15.00 a meal. Then the State notified the county that they would be cutting their funding from \$164,000.00 to \$94,000.00. Pike County is seeing an increase from Upson County, but it is the very minimum. CM Rogers stated he hopes to get the Senior Center the commercial kitchen.

- Greg Hobbs – Tax Assessors

Greg Hobbs addressed the Board stating money is tight and he understands that. Citizens have asked why every house in the county has not been assessed. Mr. Hobbs presented to the Board a proposal for three different options: full walk around, limited review and limited-plus review. The services provided by the proposal company will be provided over a one-year period. The services are update cost schedules and inventory real property, physical review of all commercial, industrial, agricultural, and residential parcels, with the exception of pre-billed mobile homes but to include all homestead mobile homes. Field reviews will consist of grading, observed condition and depreciation. A photo of all the improvements will be taken. Non returned items will be measured and recorded for taxation depending on the review type. Developing cost schedules for all improvement types. Schedules will be based on cost values that when adjusted to local market conditions will produce fair market values. Neighborhood and location adjustments and tables will be developed and applied where market conditions dictate. Developing urban land schedules to properly value residential, commercial, and industrial land. These schedules will be developed using methods of lot, front foot, square foot, or acreage as deemed appropriate by company and county. Developing land values for small and large rural tracts. Documenting work. Reviewing sales for timber value. Reviewing sales for other non-land value items. Using improvement values as determined by Georgia Mass Appraisal Solutions & Services, Inc, GMASS, and approved by County Chief Appraiser. Irrigation and other non-land item values will be assigned by GMASS. Providing a list of sales with extracted values, timber, and other non-land values. Classifying small tracts according to accessibility and desirability. Classifying tracts above small acre break (large tracts) as open land, woodland, and ponds. Open land and woodland will be broken down into nine productivity classes based on NRCS soil information and Department of Revenue ratings. Ponds will be assigned one of three classes based on clearing, dam construction and waterline. Accessibility and desirability codes will be assigned. Values for each land classification will be established. Developing an accessibility/desirability schedule that will contain adjustments for size, location, and characteristics inherent within the parcel. Schedule shall begin at an acre level of .01 and extend to the largest tract acreage in the county. Schedule shall contain acre increments of one acre to the small acre break point. Acre increments above the small acre break point shall be determined by market analysis. Acreage increments of a tenth will be present to accommodate parcels less than one acre. Values around the small acre break will be blended to present as smooth as possible transition from small acreage to large acreage valuation. Determining the absorption rate for large tracts where insufficient sales exist. Absorption rate will be incorporated into accessibility/desirability table. Providing narrative descriptions of all land schedules and their components. Data transfer of all collected field data into county's CAMA (WinGap). Review and edit all data, information, and values prior to mailing assessment notices. Generating sales ratio studies for all property types that meet the requirements of the Georgia Department of Revenue and the Pike County Board of Tax Assessors. Providing an appraiser registered with the Georgia Real Estate Appraiser Board for hearings and appeals review. (per diem rate applies) Mr. Hobbs stated the Department of Revenue has been in the county since Monday and they have helped his office tremendously. They have shown the Tax Assessors office several short cuts. Mr. Hobbs stated he is very thankful that the Department of Revenue is in the county. The county will probably have to have a flight over the county within the next year. Mr. Hobbs stated the Department of Revenue is reviewing the year 2022 and the next review is in 2025, next year, and he does not want to be in the same place again. The estimated price to do the proposal for Pike County walk around is approximately \$400,000.00.

- Brooklyne Wassel – Cooperative Extension (County Agent)

Brooklyne Wassel addressed the Board stating the University of Georgia Extension mission is to translate the science of everyday living for families, farmers, and communities to foster a healthy and prosperous Georgia. The branches are Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H and Youth, and Family and Consumer Sciences. Brooklyne Wassel is the County Extension Coordinator and the Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Penny Cosper the 4-H Educator and Ruth Jackson is the Administrative Assistant. In the year 2023 the Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mrs. Wassel stated she was able to conduct 1,838 consultations by assisting clients with questions via office meeting, calls, emails, and site visits. These concerns range from pond and well water questions to weed identification and pasture management. Mrs. Wassel noted she hosted 75 programs. Programs are scheduled and held both virtually and in-person on topics such as native bee hotel building and design, beef carrel artificial insemination, gardening, and pesticide certifications. The

Extension office was able to help Pike County with 313 diagnostic samples. Diagnostic samples are offered for soils, water, plant diseases, feed quality, forage quality and more. In addition to the budget, Mrs. Wassel noted she was able to secure \$8,478.00 in additional funding. Primarily through two outside grants. The 4-H and Youth, Mrs. Penny Cosper was able to serve 311 4-H'ers in school. Monthly, Penny Cosper meets with fifth and sixth grade students in Pike County to deliver programming on topics ranging from soil science and weather to civics and the government. Every year Pike County Extension takes students to camp to enjoy time outdoors, time with their friends, learning about environmental education and the experiences camp brings. This past year, Penny Cosper was able to take 71 campers. Pike County had 142 competitors to go to District, State and National Competitions. 4-H youth have the opportunity to compete in contests such as District Project Achievement, poultry judging, livestock shows, project SAFE, horse shows, horse quiz bowl, art contests and more. The Extension office has 25 certified volunteers. Certified volunteers assist with coaching, judging, and leading youth activities. One of the largest volunteer areas is Project SAFE (archery and shotgun teams). Mrs. Wassel stated since she started in 2018, Pike County Farm Gate has had a 30% increase in agricultural value and now at \$25.6 million dollars. The community is growing. The Extension Office is looking forward to moving to Chestnut Oak in July 2024. This new facility will lead to new opportunities and class settings. The Extension Office is looking forward to utilizing the space both inside and out for club meetings, hands-on workshops, and clinics. Challenges are constantly changing as the forecast changes. A few challenges lie ahead for the Extension Office that include reliable internet, reliable phones, rural/suburban interface, preserving agriculture and vehicle concerns. The Extension Office currently has an explorer. Challenges that lie ahead for this year include marketing, increase the professional development, rural/suburban interface, and SAFE Sports Facilities upgrade. The SAFE Sports Facility is now located across from the Parks and Recreation Department. The upgrade would be a covered facility so practice can be held, rain or shine. The Extension office would like to offer archery. In order to have archery, the building would need to be 30'x 60' which is of a large price. The Extension Office could purchase a 24' x 48' building that later can be modified to allow covered archery practice. The design greatly reduces the costs, and still provides a sound structure for its uses. With Pike County Public Works assistance, and some community pride and cooperation, the building can be built for under \$25,000.00 of budget funds to help construct the facility. In the coming years, if not this budget year, the Extension Office would like to purchase a vehicle fit for the duty of the agricultural agent and necessary tools. Mrs. Wassel noted she has to use her personnel vehicle to pull trailers.

- Mark Camp – Agribusiness Authority

Mark Camp addressed the Board stating Agribusiness Authority was able to pay off their loan in the amount of \$24,000.00. The Agribusiness Authority is asking the county for \$43,200.00 for the year. (\$3,850.00 a month) The revenues coming into the Agribusiness Authority include Chestnut Oak rental \$6,00.00, Dailey Arena Rental (30 a month) \$3,600.00, Vendor Fees \$4,00.00, Concession Revenue \$2,000.00, Sponsorship of Public Events \$500.00, Grants \$5,000.00, Gifts \$500.00. A total revenue of \$67,800. In-kind county reimbursement of \$5,000.00. The expenditures for the Agribusiness Authority include Account Services \$2,000.00, Audit Fees \$1,000.00, Advertising \$2,000.00, Executive Director \$5,000.00, Donations (Farm Bureau, FFA, 4-H, Upson County Steer Show) \$400.00, Hosting Public Events (Farm Day, Ag & Consumer Science Education) \$1,000.00, Dues (Farm Bureau, FFA Alumni, Chamber of Commerce) \$300.00, Education – Meetings and Seminars \$250.00, Gifts (Plaques and Flowers) \$300.00, Grant Research and Preparation \$600.00, Ag Tour Expense (Meals, etc.) \$1,000.00, Chestnut Oaks Cell Phone \$500.00, Chestnut Oaks Maintenance (repairs, trash removal, mowing, trail maintenance) \$10,000.00, Chestnut Oaks Utilities (electric-Upson EMC and Internet Provider) \$4,000.00, Office Supplies \$1,500.00, Public Information (Facebook maintenance and website) \$1,200.00, Equipment Purchase \$35,000.00, Concession Stand Expense \$1,000.00. A total expenditure of \$67,050.00.

- Victoria Bryan - Parks and Recreation

Victoria Bryan, Interim Parks and Recreation Director, addressed the Board thanking them for their support of the Parks and Recreation Department. The new Community Center has been open for a year now. Two fields were added, a baseball and softball field. With the Recreation Department growing, there are some growing pains, the Parks and Recreation need more employees and retain the employees they have; therefore, the budget reflects an increase for new regular employees' wages and increase in salary to retain the employees they have. There is an increase in the budget for equipment for the purchase of an aerator and top dresser. There are 804 kids signed up for spring baseball/softball compared to 743 kids last year. The budget reflects an increase in events such as the Mother/Son dance that the Parks and Recreation hosts each year, they are adding a second night to this event this year to accommodate more attendees instead of turning them away. The Parks and Recreation has plans for an art camp, cheer camp and a theatre camp this year.

- Mark Whitley – Water & Sewerage Authority

Mark Whitley addressed the Board stating the Water & Sewerage Authority does not have much change from previous years. The Water & Sewerage Authority budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 shows an increase of \$200.00. The increase includes an increase in postage. Chairman Briar Johnson asked how many customers the Water Authority has now, Mr. Whitley replied around 500 customers.

- Jimmy Totten – EMA (added to agenda)

Jimmy Totten addressed the Board stating most of his budget is grant funding. This year EMA will be buying a new vehicle for EMA and transitioning the Tahoe to the Fire Service. The EMA will be purchasing a truck and outfitted for the use of emergency services. This year is the hazard mitigation planning, this plan is done every five years to keep Pike County EMA eligible for the grants.

Presentations

- Rob Morton – County Attorney

County Attorney Rob Morton addressed the Board stating he has not asked for an increase in his budget. Mr. Morton provided an overview of some of the matters that are currently active.

The County Clerk was provided with a copy of the notice that was sent to Mr. Tom Morgan relating to the Flat Shoals litigation.

The Kay Landers litigation is in the discovery phase, still have not received notice of depositions.

The Rosemary Bunn case is currently with the EEOC and have not heard anything. A response was filed in a timely basis. At this point and time is when they do their investigation. The county is in a waiting phase with this.

The county has ongoing Opioid related settlements and payments. The county continues to receive documents for execution for updates, and processing of funds. This is an ongoing process.

The county does have monthly ordinance violation cases. Mr. Morton is not necessary for the arraignment calendar but is necessary for the trial calendar. There are three scheduled for April.

Mr. Morton does a lot of work with Open Records Request. Right now, Mr. Morton is involved with a sensitive matter involving sealed records involving the Sheriff's Office and a prior criminal case.

Have had questions from the Joint Board of Elections and Registrars related to primary and general elections.

The Watering Hole Pass issue at Ranchland Estates was mentioned previously. The Board approved swapping a portion of the property previously for the cul-de-sac and was waiting on the revision. Mr. Morton was under the impression that had been submitted to Planning and Development a year ago and was informed recently that was not the case and Mr. Whitley took over that process and had all three plats were recently approved and filed by Whitley's request.

The county is still waiting on the report from the Department of Community Affairs regarding the CDBG grant the county received on Tanyard Road. Mr. Morton did receive at the end of January all the deliverables from Whitley engineering related to the right-of-way acquisition. Once the Board decides how to move forward with the process, they have all the documentation to move forward with contacting the property owners and addressing the right of way acquisition. Mr. Morton stated the intent of today was to move forward with that process. The County Manager referenced the apples to oranges distinction between the CDBG project and the Tanyard Road right of way acquisition is an accurate statement, the concern is the county does not want to do anything to jeopardize the CDBG grant. The county will need to get clarity on it. Some title work had to be done on Tanyard Road.

Mr. Morton sent a notice of appeal to the Department of Revenue on behalf of the Board of Commissioners requesting a performance review of the Tax Assessors. Hopefully by having the performance review they will mitigate or waive the penalty previously sent to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Morton does a lot of work for many entities in the county. Mr. Morton has been handling closings for the Development Authority. With the County Attorney handling the closings, it is handled under the County Attorney contract with the county and there are no additional costs for closings except for filing fees or document fees but not additional attorney fees.

Commissioner's Comments

- District 1 - Commissioner Daniel

No report.

- District 2 – Commissioner Guy

No report.

- District 3 – Commissioner Proctor

No report.

- District 4 – Commissioner Jenkins

No report.

- At-Large Chairman – J. Briar Johnson

At-Large Chairman Briar Johnson thanked the County Manager, the Finance Officer, the County Attorney, the County Clerk and all the Staff in the county for all their work. The county is not the top paying county, but there are dedicated staff that want to work in Pike County. Chairman Johnson wanted all the employees to know they are appreciated.

Final County Manager Comments

- Brandon Rogers

County Manager Brandon Rogers noted the budget packet they have in front of them is very preliminary. CM Rogers has not had meetings with the Departments yet. CM Rogers noted a couple of things that he has already changed on the budget; Department 13 – Commissioners reflects a significant decrease from last year to this year’s budget. The reason that is every year the county tries to be more transparent and add more clarity of how this budget is done. One thing that was done this year was remove the HRA portion and the Defined Benefit portion and put them in all the Departments that they are for. Where you would see a \$600,000 line item under Department 13 Board of Commissioners, that has been split between the different departments based on the number of employees they have. The bottom number did not change.

COLAs were added to departments and a specific raise was not asked for. County Manager Rogers included a 2.5% for COLA. The salary study has been added to the budget under Department 13.

The expenditure and revenue line items are reflecting a significant difference right now. This has to be taken into consideration when going over the budget because this means the taxes will go up or the budget will have to be cut.

County Manager Brandon Rogers noted when the Chief Tax Assessor was talking about his budget, he provided a proposal to the Board, and when he submitted his requested budget, it was not included in because it did not total what the bottom number was when entering the line items. CM Rogers noted now he knows where the missing piece was, and he will have to change the Tax Assessors budget to include the proposal and fly over which is about a half million dollar increase to the Tax Assessors budget.

CM Rogers stated in Department 75, IDA, the \$98,171.00 that is budgeted is what the IDA reimburses the county. For Kyle Fletcher to receive benefits at an affordable price, the county added Kyle Fletcher as a county employee and pays her benefits and salary then IDA reimburses the county the exact amount. It is a zero wash.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Proctor to adjourn at 4:02 p.m., motion carried 5-0.

J. Briar Johnson, Chairman

Angela Blount, County Clerk