



DeKalb County Government

Manuel J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Minutes - Draft

FAB-Finance, Audit & Budget Committee

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

3:30 PM

This meeting will be conducted via teleconference (Zoom). Simultaneous public access to the meeting will be available

(1) via live stream on DCTV's webpage,

(2) on DCTVChannel23.TV

Meeting Started At: 3:30PM

Attendees: Commissioners Rader, Cochran-Johnson, Johnson, Terry, Patrick

Present 3 - Commissioner Jeff Rader, Commissioner Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, and Commissioner Larry Johnson

I. MINUTES

2022-1538 Commission District(s): ALL
Minutes for the April 18, 2022 Special Called Finance, Audit, and Budget Committee

MOTION was made by Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, seconded by Jeff Rader, that this agenda item be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Commissioner Rader, and Commissioner Cochran-Johnson

Not Present: 1 - Commissioner Johnson

II. AGENDA ITEM

New Agenda Items:

[2022-1459](#) Commission District(s): All Commission Districts
Victims of Crime Act Grant Award Victim-Witness Advocate Grant
Program Funded by The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)
through the Prosecuting Attorney's Council (PAC) of Georgia.
Funding Amount \$212,075

MOTION was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, that this agenda item be recommended for approval. to the Board of Commissioners, due back on 5/10/2022. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Commissioner Rader, Commissioner Cochran-Johnson, and Commissioner Johnson

-information provided by Samia Fields

-Question JR: are either of these grants for a limited duration that would further necessitate further county action?

S Fields: no; each of these grants are on an annual cycle

-Question JR: do you expect these grants to be renewed on an ongoing basis?

S Fields: they are 2 fold. They are competitive discretionary grants. However we do get them every year because the State gets those every year. For the course of 3 years we get a portion of that. We still have to apply for a portion of that but we do get them every year

[2022-1460](#) Commission District(s): All Commission Districts
OVW Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant Award Special
Victims Unit, Domestic Violence Prosecution Funded by the Criminal
Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) Award Amount \$50,000 /
\$16,667 (Match)

MOTION was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, that this agenda item be recommended for approval. to the Board of Commissioners, due back on 5/10/2022. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Commissioner Rader, Commissioner Cochran-Johnson, and Commissioner Johnson

-information provided by Samia Fields

III. STATUS UPDATE

Purchasing System Process Update: Audit Response

-information provided by Andria Williams, CFO McNabb, Michael Johnston from Nichols & Cauley

-LJ: Commissioner Johnson requests a process of certain documentation that should be provided prior to approval

-Question LCJ: all applications should be subject to review prior to approval

Z Williams: these are excellent points and are why we initiated this audit. These findings, you always hope for a perfect score, but now what we're doing is focusing on how we fix those things we have identified

-Question JR: this audit focuses on a narrow area of the purchasing process. To what degree do you believe this line of improvement is comprehensive to evaluate the integrity of the process?

L Campbell: this is a significant aspect of the process. I'm continually working with COO Williams to determine the type of policy decisions that should be made

-Question LCJ: are you an independent contractor Mr. Johnston:

M Johnston: I am an independent vendor

-Question LCJ: does any of this have to do with the current technology in place? Are there recommendations for upgrades there?

M Johnston: you have a fairly sophisticated Oracle system; I'm not an IT expert so I can't recommend on whether technology upgrades would be needed. For what I have looked at, the accounting documents are relevant and in place in the system. I don't think it's a system limitation that would need an upgrade

-Question LCJ: regarding a purchasing advisory committee, is this a recommendation you are making for us to have?

M Johnston: that is not a recommendation I made. There is a county policy that requires the establishment of a purchasing advisory committee. In my review I saw that that was not established

-Question LCJ: is this purchasing advisory committee something that we don't see necessary?

Z Williams: we can have P3 Delivery, the firm we've hired to review committees and commissions. We anticipate a report back in the next couple of weeks. We can provide a response back on this specific question. That work is ongoing.

LCJ: a purchasing advisory committee seems like an added minutia in lieu of a good purchasing department

-Question LCJ: on the accounts payable side are we healthy? Do we have a great deal of invoices that are out? Healthy means one should be able to pay their debt

Z Williams: the vast majority is net-30 on our timeline for paying vendors. Notwithstanding the ARP challenges, the system is more than healthy. We can provide specific metrics and report back. To define the health of our system we would look at a host of factors

D McNabb: we are healthy; one of the reasons we undertook this is the time it would take to get vendors paid. What I found in my research is either we didn't have a requisition or purchase order. Once the process is matched accordingly, our system pays automatically within 30 days. We can only process based on the background data received. The reality of we were getting over 60% of our invoices prior to purchase orders, or approvals were going through user departments and not to us -we cannot pay something out until all documents match and the process is followed. I think we're headed in the right direction and things are beginning to improve

-LCJ: thank you, I understand that there needs to be a better process

-Question LJ: do you recommend a navigator to get through this process and recommend a timeline back?

Z Williams: my thought is the process we're doing right now - hire someone that can dedicate themselves to working on these identified 9 issues and tweak the system if necessary, while updating the technological issues. I don't think it's hiring a specific navigator; I think the positions are here - it's just doing this work.

-Question JR: did you recommend best practices from other businesses/jurisdictions?

Z Williams: Mr. Johnston was brought in after the audit was conducted; we hired the consultant to assist us in managing our way through it

-RP: working as a bureaucrat, what I'm hearing is we're working through an enhanced level of service for our residents and commissioners. If we're moving in that direction thank you very much

Z Williams: that's exactly what this is about, in order to improve our business processes to ultimately benefit our citizens

-Question LCJ: this report was initially developed some time ago. How long? There ought to be automatic triggers, where as material is submitted, you can't do one thing until you do another. How long before we have the development of the SOPs that are presented to us?

Z Williams:

M Johnston: the standard operating procedure is being developed by my team, Lisa Andrews, CFO McNabb, the accounts payable team, and training materials to go along with that. I suspect within the next 2 months we should have a very good document developed

D McNabb: we have SOP's and training materials set forth with the process; what we found is that the County had deviated from that process where payment wouldn't happen until the other steps are completed. What we wanted was better SOPs,

better training, so the SOPs can occur in the process they should occur, and the vendor be paid timely

Code Compliance Audit

-information provided by COO Williams, Director Campbell, Director Hardy

-Question LCJ: in the news was my first time hearing the Code Compliance office noted there were 10 different systems trying to communicate in different ways

Z Williams: I believe it's 4 with data getting information from one system to another. This whole issue rests from lack of integration, systems designed for these purposes, and manual input that make it challenging to stay on top of these systems

-Question LCJ: this initial report was in 2017 where these things were pointed out. I want to hear where we are with the issue of technology. Code Compliance and Sanitation are the areas where I receive the bulk of calls from my constituents. We need a system to empower people where they are in the process. For people that means that our issue has not been addressed and they hold everyone in the pipeline accountable. I want to hear a system that brings all of these 4 things together where you can track what's going on in real time. Everything should be in one central corridor. We shouldn't hear there is no documentation.

-Question LJ: how could you have 4 different entry points, because you are using one system? Where is the quality control? Someone should be checking to see if something is open/closed, etc.

Z Williams: you have to look at in a linear lens, beginning with the code enforcement officer that captures this data. We will come back to this issue, and Director Matelski is prepared to speak to a flow chart that identifies where the systems do and don't interface. It starts with Mr. Hardy's team members that document this, but ends in the court systems for this process

-LJ: I want to see the visible flow chart to identify how the backlog is addressed and a timeline

-Z Williams: timeline - first quarter 2023

-LCJ: I know we need an action plan, but we also need a functional system. Has there been any determination made on a software packet that would better communicate where we are with real time issues related to code compliance?

-background and context on open cases provided by Attorney Ernstes

-LCJ: Code Compliance in itself is a process. After the citation is issued, it takes on a completely different life when the courts get involved. In some instances where we have tall weeds and grass or open trash, it shouldn't take 30 days to fix. We should address the 30 days allowed

V Ernstes: I'll be glad to look at that I've made notes. Regarding the open cases, this categorization of cases happened before Mr. Hardy and is a longstanding issue

-Question TT: I'm excited about the systems being improved. I'd like to see if we can hone in on - now that Mr. Campbell and department have an understanding of what an 'open case' may entail. Could we get a refresher on open cases still being worked through and those in the courts? Are there cases where a resolution has not been identified? Is there a way to triage?

L Campbell: that's a great question. The documentation of the information wasn't available to delineate the type of cases that were open, and insufficient information to determine the current status of cases. That is something we are trying to determine with the recommendations on the new process made

-LCJ: we need mandatory minimum fines for certain violations. I know our judges have certain latitude - I believe that justice works best when it works best and folks know that it occurred. If people know that mandatory fines are assessed, I think that would be a major deterrent. I really want us to look at that

-Z Williams: I would like to have Mr. Matelski give an overview of what we're working with on the separate systems.

Additionally, I believe that this discussion needs to be addressed with the Magistrate Court - unless the Magistrate Court has the resources necessary the backlog will increase

-LCJ: Mr. Hardy I want to see things work well for you and the residents of DeKalb

LJ: I want Code Enforcement to work efficiently and effectively. I want to ensure that our Law Department - code enforcement doesn't become a way that targets our seniors. In some places code enforcement is used as a weapon to get people out of their homes. Please see how it is done in other parts of the country.

-LCJ: maybe in the crafting of this version, a senior may be able to check a box where a senior has a fixed income where there is a limited capacity. There may be a fund that can be utilized for the effort as well.

-Question RP: in my Norcross experience there were veterans that had a 15 day turnaround time that led to a lot of frustration. There were code enforcement officers that were the TLC agents that were friendly and approachable. We don't our seniors feeling bumped around by the government. Whatever software package - something that integrates with GIS for zoning history, code enforcement history, police history - this information becomes helpful if there is a history at that location. As Mr. Williams stated getting the court system what they need, then that is something we should get fixed.

-Z Williams: we've invested over \$15M and various things to deal with blight. Over 400 homes have been abated over the past several years. These things reflect a commitment to address quality of life and visual appeal of the County. Now we are looking at how we can be more efficient, and is an evolution of where we have come to over the past 5 years or so. Mr. Matelski can provide information on how the systems need to integrate and the process for what the solutions may be.

Future conversations may happen in other committees such as PECS to discuss process and funding for Magistrate Court,

Solicitor's Office, etc.

-information provided by Director Matelski

-LCJ: we need to have a system where once a matter is adjudicated, we are able to scan those documents

-Question LJ: we still need to have a way to address the cases that are open and not being dealt with. Just let people know they are not being thrown by the wayside because we are building a new system by 2023

Z Williams: yes we'll take a look

-Question TT: I want to emphasize what commissioners have said about having compassion and TLC with certain issues, and that we work with our residents who need that support. I think we're doing that; this is not be punitive but corrective. There are situations where punitive activity is needed, and that's what the court system is for. Providing additional resources to our courts will get to the roots of the bottlenecks we've been hearing. Do we think that the investments that are being proposed for the courts - are we waiting until midyear or can we advance those sooner than later?

Z Williams: my first conversation was a couple of weeks ago. If it is possible to move sooner that's what we'll propose. We're not simply waiting for midyear. We also anticipate the next tranche of ARP funds in that time between now and midyear also

J Matelski: we'll have those financial numbers as soon as we have them. We are collaborating along the way pre-midyear and will be collaborating as much as necessary up to and past that point

-LCJ: as we mention the courts, I see that we have our Solicitor General Stribling. Whatever what is needed to perform these duties, now is an excellent time

-comments provided by Solicitor General Donna Coleman-Stribling

-LCJ: could you come back at the top of our next meeting to present your needs from yourself Mary Bell, Claudia Saari. I would assume that you will be seeking this during mid-term appropriations

D Coleman Stribling: yes we will. And this will be appropriations among our 3 offices so it will take some time

-TT: if there is a way to expedite these before midyear I am all for it

Watershed Debt Offering

-discussion not heard in committee

Financial Statements

-discussion not heard in committee

Meeting Ended At: 5:37PM

MOTION was made by Larry Johnson, seconded by Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, that this agenda item was adjourned meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Commissioner Cochran-Johnson, and Commissioner Johnson

Not Present: 1 - Commissioner Rader

Barbara H. Sanders-Norwood CCC, CMC