

**HAMILTON COUNTY COMMISSION
AGENDA PREPARATION SESSION
SEPTEMBER 28, 2022**

STATE OF TENNESSEE	)	Agenda Preparation Session
COUNTY OF HAMILTON	)	September 28, 2022

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on this 28th day of September, 2022, an Agenda Preparation Session of the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners was begun and held at the Courthouse, in the City of Chattanooga, in the County Commission Room, when the following proceedings were held, to wit:--

0:11

Present and presiding was the Honorable Joe Graham, Chairman Pro Tempore. County Clerk Bill Knowles called the roll of the County Commission and the following, constituting a quorum, answered to their names: Commissioner Beck, Commissioner Chauncey, Commissioner Eversole, Commissioner Helton, Commissioner Highlander, Commissioner Mackey, Commissioner Martin, Commissioner Sharpe, Commissioner Shipley and Chairman Pro Tempore Graham. Chairman Baker was absent. Total present - 10. Total absent - 1.

Also in attendance were County Mayor Weston Wamp, some members of his administrative staff, County Attorney Rheubin Taylor, and County Auditor Jenneth Randall.

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Chairman Pro Tempore Graham indicated the upcoming agenda items would be considered as follows:

- The Trustee's Monthly and Excess Fee Report for August 2022 would be submitted for the record.
- Order of Designation to the Planning Commission would be submitted for the record.
- Resolution No. 1022-1 was the usual County Clerk item regarding notaries, etc. This required no committee assignment.
- Resolution Nos. 1022-8 through 1022-13 was assigned to the Finance Committee, chaired by Commissioner Martin.
- Resolution Nos. 1022-2 through 1022-7 were heard by a Committee of the Whole.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-2

This Resolution appoints Eric Zitzow to the Hamilton County Industrial Development's Board to fill an unexpired term ending August 16, 2023.

There were no questions from Commissioners.

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-3

1:32

Director of Maintenance and Operations for the Department of Education Justin Witt spoke regarding this item, which authorizes the County Mayor to enter into and execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the Hamilton County Board of Education and Empire Communities for the purchase of 18.6 acres (more or less) at the former Cigna facility located at 7555 Goodwin Road for a future school. It was noted they will amend the General Fund expenditures budget by \$8,000,000.00.

2:18

In response to Commissioner Martin's question, Attorney Taylor stated the Hamilton County Attorney's office has been actively involved in the entire process. Commissioner Martin noted it was important for the Commission to know this about our Attorney who serves the whole county.

2:51

In response to Commissioner Martin's question, Mr. Witt stated the building is a 100,000 square foot open floor plan. He noted the estimated cost to renovate the existing building for school use will be around \$18-20 million. He also stated the Cigna property should have enough space for 750 students. The existing school across the street is overcrowded and pairing this with East Brainerd Elementary to make a K-2 or K-3 would help with the overcrowding in this area. Empire Communities is buying the

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entire 90-acre site from Cigna and at the same time selling the county the headquarters and adjacent land.

5:58 Commissioner Mackey spoke about the growth in the East Brainerd/Apison area. He stated a lot of residential development has been opposed for that area.

9:43 At this time, a lengthy conversation took place between Mr. Witt and several Commissioners on the cost to construction a new school versus renovating the existing Cigna building into a school. Mr. Witt stated there would be a \$35 million price tag on a new school without the land. He noted this would be a large addition to the East Brainerd area.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-4

23:45 Director of Hamilton County Emergency Management Chris Adams spoke regarding this item, which authorizes the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to apply for a 2022 Homeland Security Grant with the Tennessee Department of Military and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and allowing the County Mayor to execute the contract upon receipt of the grant. He stated this is an annual no match security grant for the 10 county region which Hamilton County is administrator over.

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24:21 In response to Chairman Pro Tempore Graham's question, Mr. Adams stated all counties are entitled to use any equipment purchased for the response to threats or emergencies.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-5

25:11 Attorney Taylor spoke regarding this item, which amends all Hamilton County Resolutions and Policies relating to appointments of the County Legislative body as previously enacted addressing appointments of this body by Districts to reflect the increase in composition of said body.

There were no questions from Commissioners.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-6

26:21 Hamilton County Sheriff Austin Garrett spoke regarding this item, which authorizes the County Mayor to accept a U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2022 Port Security Grant and amend the capital budget of the Sheriff's Office by adding \$262,500.00 to revenues and \$350,000.00 to expenditures. He stated there is a \$87,500 match. He noted Hamilton County Sheriff's office Grants Coordinator Megan Webb has secured almost \$2 million in grants for the Sheriff's Office. He also stated

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Congressman Fleischmann's Office supported the Sheriff's Office with this grant. He introduced Mrs. Webb and Hamilton County Sheriff Office Lieutenant Matthew Purvis to give a presentation. A copy of the presentation has been filed with the Clerk's Office.

27:56 Lt. Purvis stated the Hamilton County Marine Patrol Team operates two boats 24/7, 365 days a year. It consists of a thirteen-man team who responds to hundreds of law enforcement calls a year, in addition to daily river patrol. He noted they are the first response to the Sequoyah Nuclear Plant. The Patrol team collaborates with the Criminal Investigation Division, S.U.R.T., S.W.A.T., patrol, TWRA, Dallas Bay Fire, Sale Creek Fire, Chattanooga Fire, and Chattanooga Swat. Additionally, they provide support for safe operations for numerous water-involved festivals in the greater Chattanooga area.

Lt. Purvis stated their current boat Marine One was purchased with the 2005 Port Security Grant and needs approximately \$132,000.00 in repairs. Their operating abilities have outgrown the current boat. He noted they have applied for several years but have not been awarded until this year.

29:57 Mrs. Webb stated they were authorized to apply for the Port Security Grant on June 15, 2022 by the previous Commission and was notified in August 2022 of the award. She noted the hard work of the patrol team and the support of Congressman

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Fleischmann has made this award possible. She also stated FEMA will pay Hamilton County \$262,500.00 and asks that the county contribute \$87,500.00 for the purchase of a new boat for the Sheriff's Office.

Lt. Purvis stated the new boat would be a larger foot print multipurpose fast response boat, which will support all divisions and their operations. He noted it will also support the port of Chattanooga and the citizens of Hamilton County for years to come.

31:08 In response to Commissioner Highlander's question, Lt. Purvis stated the old boat will go to surplus and then sent to auction.

31:52 In response to Commissioner Martin's question, Administrator of Finance Lee Brouner stated the funds would come from the General Fund Balance.

32:09 In response to Chairman Pro Tempore Graham, Lt. Purvis stated Marine One stays on the water above the dam 24/7 and Marine Two stays at the West annex on a trailer so it can be transported where it needs to go.

32:57 At this time, several Commissioner's commended Lt. Purvis and his team on the great work they provide Hamilton County.

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – RESOLUTION NO. 1022-7

34:35 Hamilton County Sheriff Austin Garrett spoke regarding this item, which accepts a grant from the humane transport of patients from the Mental Health Transport program for the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office in the amount of \$1,039,768.00 to be expended by June 30, 2023. He stated the Sheriff's Office currently operates with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a company at no cost to the County. They bill insurance companies and absorb the indigent side of it. He noted this grant will offset the indigent transportation.

36:47 In response to Commissioner Highlander's question, Sheriff Garret stated this was a no match grant.

37:08 Commissioner Martin, Chairman of the Finance Committee, stated the Finance Committee would meet in the Commission Room immediately following today's Agenda Session.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Pro Tempore Graham asked for announcements from members of the Commission.

37:38 Commissioner Martin announced the City of Lakesite will be having their 50 year anniversary on October 8, 2022 from 10:00AM to 2:00PM at the Lakesite City Park. He noted they will have activities to celebrate the occasion.

38:25 In responses to Commissioner Beck's question, Attorney Taylor stated the past County Commission reenergized the effort of appropriated monies for the plaques to honor former Hamilton County Executive Dalton Roberts and former Hamilton County Mayor Claude Ramsey (*Resolution No. 822-55*). He noted the City of Chattanooga passed a Resolution three years ago honoring former Hamilton County Mayor Claude Ramsey by renaming a portion of Hickory Valley Road. He also stated once the plaques are completed it will be up to the Mayor and this body to decide the appropriate celebration and events to put the plaques in place.

40:25 Commissioner Helton congratulated East Hamilton High School golf team for winning the TSSAA DI-AA Region 3 Championship.

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40:48 Commissioner Highlander recognized Ron Powers and Luther Killion in the audience. He also commended Sheriff Garrett, SRO Officer's, and SSO Officer's for what they do daily to keep our children safe.

42:16 Mayor Wamp spoke about the challenges the Sheriff's Office faces with Silverdale Correctional Facility staffing and law enforcement officers across the board. He announced that he and Sheriff Garrett have agreed by MOU to an increase in the entire pay matrix at the Sheriff's Office. It is one of the larger pay increases in the history of this county. He noted it was a great statement coming from the new Sheriff and support statement coming from general county government. He also stated it will allow immediate and adequate hiring at the jail. He noted the financial outlook for the county is not great and there are tough decisions ahead but this was a priority for county government.

Sheriff Garrett stated he will be freezing multiple unfilled positions at the Sheriff's Office in order to give 16 percent raises to uniformed officers, including hard to fill correctional posts. He noted \$3.2 million being allotted for various positions would now go to raise the starting pay of correctional officers from \$43,000.00 per year to \$50,000.00 and patrol deputies from \$44,000.00 to \$51,500.00. He also stated Chief of Staff Ron Bernard designed the plan. They return millions of dollars to the county budget each year for the unfilled positions so this made the most sense.

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49:40 In response to Commissioner Martin's question, Sheriff Garrett stated they are looking to fill 50 to 55 positions across the Sheriff's Office focusing on the jail and court services. Commissioner Martin thanked Sheriff Garrett and Mayor Wamp for working together on this issue.

51:29 Commissioner Mackey stated he would like a comparison of the Sheriff's Office employees and Teacher's pay.

52:40 At this time, several Commissioners commended Sheriff Garrett, Mr. Bernard and Mayor Wamp for their hard work and getting all of this in place to help better serve the county.

1:14:35 In response to Commissioner Mackey's question, Superintendent of Education Justin Robertson stated teachers with a bachelor's degree start out at \$45,000.00 a year.

1:19:53 Commissioner Sharpe stated two years ago the previous Commission voted to approve a 15 percent pay increase for Sheriff Deputies.

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1:21:59 Commissioner Martin stated in 2020 the average deputy received a 14 percent raise and every deputy received at least a 5 percent raise. He noted the Commission was able to appropriate \$1.9 million for these raises.

Sheriff Garrett encouraged everyone to recruit one person to join the Sheriff's Office. He noted there is a link located at www.hcsheriff.gov.

1:25:17 Chairman Pro Tempore Graham announced the Lookout Valley Lions Club will host their 15th annual car show at the John A. Patten Community Center. Funds raised will go to purchase food and toys for citizens in District 11 for Christmas who are in need. He also recognized former Commissioner Katherlyn Geter in the audience.

DELEGATIONS

Chairman Pro Tempore Graham asked for delegations on matters other than zoning.

1:28:46 Dan Meehan, residing in District 7, spoke on the compensation in the Sheriff's Office. He stated it is an honorable profession and he supports Mayor Wamp and Sheriff Garrett.

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1:32:01 Dan Meehan, Charlie Wysong, Glenda Pappu, Brandy Howard, and Melanie Stover, all residing in Hamilton County, addressed the Commission with their concern about an event that took place during Pride Week in Chattanooga. They stated minor children were present during a drag queen show and one child stroked the groin of one of the performing drag queens. They noted this child's video has been plastered all over the internet and her life will now be changed because of it. They stated laws have been broken and this incident should be investigated.

1:38:01 Levi Witt and Noah Corbin, residing in Hamilton County, spoke about the safety of children and an incident that took place during Pride Week in a local bar. Mr. Witt stated he is the Treasurer of Tennessee Valley Pride and noted the content in the video circling the internet is a biological women dressed as Ariel and is not a male getting his groin stroked. Mr. Witt stated he along with everyone else addressing the Commission are there to keep children safe. Mr. Corbin stated he is the President of Chattanooga Pride. He noted any accusations that the venue broke any law or regulations should be investigated if they did in fact break any laws. Mr. Corbin also stated he was one of the organizers of the event and they are taking a look at their protocols for future events.

1:47:00 Commissioner Highlander stated sexuality is a topic that should be left to families. He noted it is inappropriate to have children in a bar setting.

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1:48:33 Chairman Pro Tempore Graham stated he would never expose his children to this. He noted he treasures his children to much.

1:49:48 Commissioner Eversole stated we should strongly send a message that we have to protect our children.

1:50:37 Ladarius Price, residing in Crooked Creek, invited the Commission to attend Parent Summit at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) Saturday October 1, 2022 for 9:00-12:00 in the University Center. He also invited the Commission to Pneuma Church for the State of our Youth at 6:00PM. He noted District Attorney Coty Wamp, Chattanooga Police Chief Murphy, Juvenile Court Judge Philyaw, Director of Community Safety and Gun Violence Chris Sands, and Chattanooga Police Department Gun Unit Supervisor Josh May will all be on the panel to discuss the youth in Hamilton County.

1:57:26 Commissioner Beck stated Hamilton County needs people like Mr. Price stepping up to help. He thanked Mr. Price for everything he is doing.

Commissioner Sharpe stated he attended the Boys Summit hosted by Lighthouse Collective and urged his fellow colleagues to attend.

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1:59:24

Administrator of General Services Christy Cooper stated the County Fair set for this weekend at McDonald Farm has been cancelled due to expected inclement weather. She noted the action was taken after a majority of vendors and exhibitors notified the county they were not able to commit.

Being no further business, Chairman Pro Tempore Graham declared the Agenda meeting adjourned until Wednesday, October 5th, at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted:



William F. (Bill) Knowles, County Clerk

Approved:

10-19-22
Date

W.F.K.
Clerk's Initials