

January 24, 2022

The Carroll County Board of Supervisors held a budget work session on January 24, 2022, in the Board Meeting Room of the Carroll County Governmental Center.

**Members Present:**

Ronnie Collins  
Joey Dickson  
Jody Early  
Rex L. Hill  
Robbie McCraw  
Tracy Moore

**Others:**

Michael Watson  
Justin Martin

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Tracy Moore called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Ronnie Collins led in invocation and pledge.

**REGISTRAR – KIMBERLY CLOUD**

Kimberly Cloud, Carroll County Registrar, presented information to the Board on the cost of elections and the advantages/disadvantages of reducing the number of precincts. She informed them that the County will lose the Woodlawn-F District as a result of the County now being fully in one senate and one house district.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES – GARY BERGERON**

Gary Bergeron, Carroll County Emergency Services Director/CCFR Fire Chief, presented an overview of county emergency services, a breakdown of FY2023 budget request and a call volume summary along with planning and goals.

Discussion was held with questions by board members regarding emergency services operations, equipment, and billing.

**GOALS AND DISCUSSION**

Mike Watson discussed with the Board a list of the goals compiled from board member submissions and from the administrator. Justin Martin discussed the CIP, ARPA funding, Financial Management Policy, historical fund balance analysis and debt policy compliance list.

## BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Jody Early stated he thinks he sent an e-mail out to everyone saying he had a conflict with the District III meeting date and time and the Airport Commission. That was incorrect; I was given an incorrect date for the Airport Commission, so I can remain as the alternate. I do want to thank both of you (Mr. Watson and Mr. Martin) for the amount of work you do. You are giving us excellent products to work with. I cannot tell you how much better it is this time than the last time I was on the board. You are doing an excellent job; thank you.

Mr. Ronnie Collins stated one of the things we have talked about is volunteers are gone; we do not have volunteers; short-staffed in EMS and the Sheriff's Office. Everyone is short-staffed from restaurants to convenience stores to schools. I would like for us to see how we can reinvigorate some of the volunteer stuff. I understand it's a different world that we live in, and people don't have time to volunteer like they did back in Andy Griffith's day. I would like for us to see how we can reinvigorate some of that. I know that in my district, when they did away volunteer EMS; the way it was handled left a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. Another thing I would like for us to take a look at is sub-stations. How many sub-stations do we own or have leases on that are not being used? I know one was given back to somebody right across the road from where I live. It was an, I don't know how many, year lease. Basically, for nothing, it was given back, a perfectly good building, and now we are talking about obtaining other sub-stations. So, I wonder how many of those we have that could be put back into use. I would like to talk to Gary about the billing and looking into how that works. What is the possibility of doing that billing in-house? I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars they are billing per year; I don't know how much we're paying a billing company to do the billing. Could we employ a couple of people to do that billing and do it ourselves? That's just something I would like to look at. I'd like for us to have some kind of narrative understanding for our citizens to understand what they get for their tax dollars. You know a lot of citizens seem to think we pay taxes to have an EMS and a fire department, and then they get billed for those services. Let's help them understand how that works. The thing I hear, and I am sure you have heard it for years, "what do we get for, what is it we get for our taxes?" I'd like to be able to tell the citizens this is what we get for the taxes that we pay. I'd love to see us get the clearing-house website of some kind for the jobs that are available; I think we'd get more applicants if people could just find them and know what's available. When it comes to budget, you know there's an old saying that sometimes you have to spend money to make money, I would like to see us put in the budget having an assistant county administrator. I don't know how you do everything you do; I really do not. With the amount of e-mails that come across my desk every single day; I don't know how you do anything but put out fires. Mike, I appreciate the job that you are doing, but if we put money in the budget to have a bona-fide assistant, or a bona-fide full-time economic development director. There's no way that one person can do everything that needs to be done. I want to see our County work from a concept of let's grow and let's excel. That's what I want to see. When it comes to the training center property, I had the same thought you (Mr. Early) had, when you talked about the fairgrounds, the recreation that could go on there; what are the possibilities? I know that Surry County took an old Lowe's

building and turned it into their first responder gathering center. That's where they all work out of. I could see our fire/rescue and Sheriff's Department utilizing those buildings and office space, whatever, and including the Rec. Department in that and opening up some very prime real estate to market to somebody that can come in and give us compound income year after year after year on a piece of property there. But in light of that, I'd like to see us have a sit-down with Acadia Health. I don't know that this Board of Supervisors and Acadia Health has ever sat down at the table together. They're coming to Carroll County, they've got 20,000 employees, they're in 40 different states, they have 230 locations; this company is absolutely huge. I think the Board of Supervisors needs to say to Acadia Health: if you're coming to Carroll County, this is what we expect. We expect our citizens to be safe and for them to be safe, we've got to come to an agreement that this is how they are going to be safe. Maybe we can help them understand they don't want to come here. Maybe they can help us understand how we would love to have them here. I don't know what it is, but how can we? Right now, it's such an adversarial relationship. I cannot imagine having a multi-billion dollar company and moving into a community that does not want me, that does not like me and having the feeling that everything's going to be adversarial if we go there. So, I'd like to see us invite Acadia Health to come sit down with us, and not just send somebody who doesn't know the details. I want people from that company who come be able to make some decisions because we have to work together. If they're coming, we've got to work together. But it's very adversarial. I'd like to hear their plans; I'd like for them to tell us what they want to do; I'd like for us to be able to tell them what we expect.

Mr. Rex Hill stated it was all good information and like his counterparts, he especially liked the financial information you have given us. It's a big difference; we have never had that in the past, and it's one the reasons I love having a financial management policy. It gives us direction on what we can spend and what we shouldn't spend.

Mr. Robbie McCraw thanked Justin and Mike for their efforts, for the financial policies and for the work they've put forward with it. It's been a long time coming for us, and we've gone through some really lean times. Like Jody said, it's a lot better now than it used to be. I'm just going to beat a dead horse just a little bit more: broadband, broadband, broadband. The people in this County are due something with broadband.

Mr. Joey Dickson thanked Mike and Justin for their hard work on everything and Jason for staying and doing what he's doing. I really want Gary and all the EMS workers to know how much we appreciate them, especially the volunteers. It's a tough job. Thank you for what you do for us every day. We as a board have got to get the support needed to ensure our citizens are taken care of, and I think we're headed in that direction. So, whatever it takes to do that, I am willing to do. On a couple of things Ronnie said, I've always agreed with billing in-house, looking at hard billing and maybe hiring someone to do that; create a job as well. I think there is a need for maybe a secretary or assistant to the County Administrator or something to take the work off Mike as well. Since you brought up the training center, it is a great place for fairgrounds, EMS, a rec. department. I've got some issues with how that's handled. The County gave the land to the State, \$180,000 to buy the water and sewer, so we're not getting anything

back out of this. Nobody can communicate, our senators are not telling us anything; they're not doing their job. We've reached out to them, and they're not answering anything. We don't know what's coming into our County. If there's no agreement that's been made, and they can't find the agreement, then what gives the State the right to sell the land. So, I think there's still a lot of unanswered questions we need to look into. I'm all for safety ordinance for this, for the training center. So hopefully we can get something moving pretty soon on this and get some answered questions.

Mr. Tracy Moore stated he would like to ditto what everyone said. I appreciate Justin, what you have done. I did speak with the County Attorney today, and he is going to come up with some things, and he really urged to reach out to our senators. He felt like we need to continue to try to find out what is going on with the training center project. From what I've always been told, and I think Mike might could elaborate, it's got to be used by the way the General Assembly passed the thing for certain things. Is that correct? Mr. Watson responded that it was placed in the budget several years ago to be used for for-profit health care purposes for a certain number of years. I can send out some information on what I have. I think there's an opportunity if Acadia Health doesn't purchase this, that there's an opportunity if we're able to. Mr. Moore responded I think that's what we need, not only to reach out to our senators and congressmen to try to get answers to why it hasn't closed, if it was going to close by now, and where we are with that, and how they can get a bill in to change it to where it's not limited to what it can be, and it can be more of a decision of the citizens of the County or the Board. The only other thing is the phone situation. I have received a lot of phone calls about the phone issues, and I'm not sure if they're Centurylink or who they are, but I think the Treasurer's Department had a rough time last week getting calls or busy. I know some of that is on the CIP program, and I think it should be top of the list. The employees we do have work hard at their job to represent the County, and they shouldn't come to work and have to deal with something that's not within their workload or realm when it's nothing they can do to change the telephone system or state ordinance.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Robbie McCraw made a motion, seconded by Rex Hill, to adjourn the meeting.

Roll call vote was as follows:

AYES:	Ronnie Collins	Rex Hill
	Joey Dickson	Robbie McCraw
	Jody Early	Tracy Moore
NAYS:	None	

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Chairman