

**Weakley County Legislative Body
Regular County Commission Meeting
Weakley County Office on Aging and
Dresden Senior Citizen's Center-Dresden, TN
Tuesday, May 26, 2020-5:30 P.M.**

The Weakley County Legislative Body was called to order by County Mayor Bynum at 5:30 p.m. at Weakley County's Office on Aging and Senior Adult Center.

The invocation was given by Joshua Moore.

All members present gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

County Clerk Hughey called the roll. Answering present were Commissioners Dennis Doster, Bobby Dunlap, Eric Owen, Larry Hudson, James Roy Pope, Greg Usery, Gary Eddings, Colton Nanney, Larry Taylor, Angela Fortner, David Bell, Dale Overton, David Hawks, Beth VanCleave, Roger Donaldson, Jack Vincent, Donnie Essary, and James Westbrook. All 18 (eighteen) members were present.

County Mayor Bynum called for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 16, 2020, Regular Meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Donaldson and a second was made by Commissioner Usery. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved with none opposed.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

None.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

County Mayor Bynum announced that the June meeting will be held on June 30th at 5:30 p.m. and the July meeting will be held on July 30th at 5:30 p.m. The location of those meetings are to be announced based upon the COVID-19 measurements that are being taken at the time.

County Mayor Bynum stated that some changes will be made to the budget process this year. Finance Director John Liggett has sent budget requests to each department. Chairman Eric Owen and Mayor Bynum will meet with each department head to go over those requests. In mid-June or early July, a “budget workshop” will be held and all commissioners will be invited. The budget will be presented in it’s entirety. A week later, Finance Ways and Means will meet for final approval. Some of the reasons that have determined this new process are to limit the amount of meetings, reduce expense, give the most time to collect the most accurate information, and the State Legislature is not set to go back into session until June 1st. Many of the decisions made during that session will have an effect on the budget we plan to approve.

The Mayor also stated that currently, Weakley County has had 26 COVID-19 cases total. Of those, 24 have recovered, leaving 2 active cases. We have had 1,157 negative tests.

On June 23rd, we began limiting public access to the county's government buildings. For approximately 40 business days, we have operated in a way that best served the public, but also kept them and our employees safe. Most all daily business was able to be transacted through online services, phone, drop boxes, and mail. County Mayor Bynum thanked all officials, department heads, and employees for efforts, energy, and understanding during this time. He also thanked the citizens of Weakley County for their understanding and patience. He thanked the media outlets for helping get information to the citizens and especially thanked Erica Moore for her tireless work.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

County Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve the Financial Reports. Commissioner Eddings made the motion and Commissioner Pope placed a second. A voice vote was taken and the Financial Reports were approved with none opposed.

VETERAN’S SERVICE REPORT

Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve the Veteran’s Service Report. Commissioner Hawks made the motion and Commissioner Hudson placed a second. A voice vote was taken and the report was approved with none opposed.

AG EXTENSION REPORT

Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve the Ag Extension Report. A motion was made by Commissioner Doster and a second was placed by Commissioner Vincent. A voice vote was taken and the report was approved with none opposed.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL & STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

ELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS AND CONFIRMATIONS

County Mayor Bynum submitted the name of Ricky Cobb for Veteran's Service Officer at the recommendation of retiring officer, Rick McKenzie. Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve the appointment. Commissioner Doster made the motion and Commissioner Pope placed a second. A roll call vote was taken. The motion was approved with all 18 commissioners voting "yes".

REAPPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE WEAKLEY COUNTY BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

Mayor Bynum submitted the names of Jerry Brigance, Becky Jolley, Bobby Nethery, Jerry Simmons, and RaeAnn Dudley for reappointment. He asked for a motion to appoint. Commissioner Taylor made the motion and Commissioner Nanney placed a second. A voice vote was taken and the appointments were approved with none opposed.

ELECTION OF NOTARIES PUBLIC

County Mayor Bynum asked for a motion for approval of the list of applicants for Notary Public that each commissioner was given. A motion was made by Commissioner Pope and a second was placed by Commissioner Westbrook. A voice vote was taken and the applicants were approved with none opposed.

NON-FINANCIAL RESOLUTIONS

- a. **Resolution No. 2020-42:** A Resolution of the Legislative Body of Weakley County, Tennessee, Adopting Minimum Training Standards for Volunteer Fire Departments Located In the Unincorporated Cities of Como/Ore Springs, Palmersville, Latham/Dukedom, Sidonia, and Palmersville. ***Sponsored by: Commissioners Larry Taylor and Gary Eddings.***

The motion was made by Commissioner Pope and a second was placed by Commissioner Eddings. A voice vote was taken and the resolution passed with none opposed.

- b. **Resolution No. 2020-44:** A Resolution Authorizing The Submittal of An Application To The Economic Development Administration [EDA] Coronavirus Aid, Relief, And Economic Security (CARES) Act For Public Works And Economic Adjustment Assistance Funding Opportunity. ***Sponsored by: Commissioners Greg Usery and David Bell.***

County Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve. Commissioner Owen made a motion to move to the heel of the calendar. A second was placed by Commissioner Westbrook. A voice vote was taken and the resolution was moved to the heel of the calendar with none opposed.

FINANCIAL RESOLUTIONS:

County Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to combine Resolutions 2020-43, 2020-45, 2020-46, and 2020-47. Commissioner Owen made the motion and Commissioner Essary placed a second. A voice vote was taken and the resolutions were combined with none opposed.

Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to approve the resolutions. A motion was made by Usery and a second was placed by Commissioner Fortner. County Clerk Hughey called the roll. The resolutions passed with all 18 commissioners answering "yes" with none opposed.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-44: Commissioner Hawks started discussion by asking when the \$2 million would hit the budget and of the \$2 million that was previously appropriated, how many citizens signed up for fiber services. He had concerns with having to cut next year's budget, while applying for more money, thus more debt. Commissioner Bell answered that it would be the budget year 2022-2023, if the grant is awarded. Mayor Bynum commented that the current Economic Development Grant through the state, is set to serve around 1,300 customers, but that it is still in developmental stages.

Commissioner Donaldson was recognized to speak. He commented that another 138 miles in the county could be covered as another step to continue to move forward with providing internet access to rural parts of the county. He went on to say that we are seeing even more need for high speed internet in our current situation with so many people working from home and students that are having to take classes on-line.

Commissioner Hawks said that one of his concerns with committing to the grant right now, is that he would first like to see how many citizens are actually going to sign up for the first round of fiber that has already been committed before putting more money towards a service that many may not want to pay for.

Commissioner Bell stated that Martin city residents and WK&T have steady competition with Charter, another internet provider located in the city limits. Rural areas in the county would not have that competition, because there are no other reliable internet providers.

Commissioner Westbrook was recognized to speak. He questioned how the current County Commission could accept grant money for the 2022-2023 budget year, and be held to it when possibly all the commissioners may have been replaced by newly elected commissioners by that time and if there are any hidden costs? Commissioner Donaldson recommended that possibly the grant could be turned down when that time comes. Mayor Bynum answered his second question by saying that there are no hidden costs

Commissioner Donaldson went on to add that the majority of our surrounding counties are being provided with high speed fiber internet and that we need to

step up to the plate. He said that our citizens not only want, but demand this service.

Commissioner Vincent was recognized to speak. He asked how far along we are with the progress on the service provided from the first grant. County Mayor Bynum responded by saying that we are still in the engineering phase. Commissioner Vincent's concern is that we are wanting to put \$2 million more into something that hasn't been started or seen results from the first grant that we were awarded. He also asked what the timeline on making a decision to apply for this grant is. He has concerns with it not being passed through proper committees and not having answers to questions. Commissioner Donaldson said that there is a very small window of opportunity with this CARES application. He said it looks like the end of May would be the end of the Federal Government taking applications.

Commissioner Hudson was recognized to speak. He asked if the money being asked for through the CARES act would only be able to be used for this particular project, or if it could be used in other ways. Mayor Bynum answered that through this application, we would only be able to use the money for fiber. If we wanted to use money in other ways, another application would have to be submitted. The applications are being awarded to those who can prove COVID-19 related needs, and high speed internet is one of ours.

Commissioner Westbrook questioned if it would be able to be turned down if we decided not to proceed with the project after the money is awarded. Mayor Bynum stated that the money could be turned down.

Commissioner Vincent commented that if we were awarded the money, that it should not be turned down.

Commissioner Doster was recognized to speak. He stated that we would be saving money by accepting the grant money in the long run, if our goal truly is to provide internet to rural areas of the county. He believes that our students need internet service, especially now that they are distance learning and that businesses are wanting it to be able to provide more services to their customers. He stated that not only the underserved citizens in rural areas with no cellular service and unreliable internet would benefit, but also emergency workers, such as fire departments and the Sheriff's Dept. would be greatly benefitted.

Commissioner Bell was recognized and spoke on the newly implemented internet sales tax and how having more citizens have high speed internet access to make online purchases, could help bring in more sales tax revenue to the county over the years. Commissioner Bell also explained how the fiber is fed through the county using trunk lines and distribution lines to make a ring. If lines are cut, customers are still provided services through this system.

County School Director, Randy Frazier was recognized to speak. He told that WK&T asked him to write a letter about how the school system was being impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. We said that well over 1000 children in our county were unable to access any learning tools because of lack of reliable internet service. He believes that if we were to apply for the grant that it would be awarded.

Questions were called for.

County Mayor Bynum asked County Clerk Hughey to call the roll.

Answering "yes" were Commissioners Doster, Dunlap, Owen, Pope, Usery, Eddings, Nanney, Taylor, Fortner, Bell, VanCleave, and Donaldson.

Answering "no" were Commissioners Overton, Hawks, Vincent, Essary, and Westbrook.

Commissioner Hudson passed.

The Resolution passed with 12 yes votes, 5 no votes, and 1 pass.

County Mayor Bynum announced that the next Regular Meeting of the County Commission would be held on June 30, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

County Mayor Bynum asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Pope made the motion and Commissioner Owen placed a second. The meeting was adjourned 6:19 p.m.

ATTEST:



Kim Hughey, Weakley County Clerk