

Logan County Commissioners Work Session
May 14, 2024

Present: Mike Brownell, Joe McBride, Jerry Sonnenberg, Alan Samber, Kristan Lange, Debbie Unrein, Marilee Johnson, Rick Cullip, Caitlin Baseggio, Diana Korbe and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION – Commissioner Sonnenberg moved to approve the minutes of May 7, 2024 as written. Commissioner McBride seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0.

REVISIONS TO WORK SESSION AGENDA – Chairman Brownell added discussion of the Landfill Supervisor.

REVIEW AND APPROVE SCHEDULE OF COUNTY BILLS – The Board met with Kristan Lange to review the Logan County schedule of bills dated May 14, 2024. All bills were approved as presented.

AMBULANCE DISTRICT BALLOT INITIATIVE AND EXTENSION OF CITY/COUNTY IGA'S – Kevin Blankenship, Sterling City Manager and Lavon Ritter, Sterling Fire Chief met with the Board to discuss the possibility of forming an ambulance district and extending the Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) between the City of Sterling and Logan County. Commissioner McBride explained that the Board initially thought that a ballot measure could be run this year to create an ambulance district. However, Alan Samber reminded the Board of the study that was done by the CDPHE in 2010 outlining the reasonings why the last ballot measure failed. Commissioner McBride added the concern at this point is the time of year. If it is added to the ballot now, it won't pass. The ambulance district needs to be approved with an adequate sales tax. They would not be able to get an increase again without an election.

Fire Chief Lavon Ritter explained the last ballot issue, The Sterling Fire Department, the Sterling Rural Fire Protection District and the County all came together and said they would form the Logan Emergency Services Authority. The City would continue to pay what they pay for the fire department into that authority, the Rural Fire Protection District would give their money to the authority and then the ambulance would be in that authority. It would have been supported by a sales tax. At that time, there were five guys on a shift, the intention was to hire five more people, basically double the staff and it was still going to be a combined service, fire and EMS. By doubling it, they figured they would be able to handle both fire, and transports.

The study talks about how that hadn't been considered but it had been. Maybe not to the point that it should have been. Transfers are a much bigger problem than ever realized. At that time, we were thinking that we would be doing around 100 transfers a year. Just to give you an idea of last year, Banner, SRMC did between three and four hundred transfers. The majority of the transfers are to the front range. There are some that go back to the nursing homes, those however, are not very common. Most of the nursing homes have the ability to transport people, the

ambulance still helps with hospice patients when they're at the hospital and need to get home. Transfers to the front range tie up approximately five to six hours for ambulance staff.

Chief Ritter commented that Commissioner McBride pursued getting Logan County Ambulance out of the transfer business. The ambulance service has a seven-person staff, guaranteed six-persons on duty. If they take two persons and they're gone for six hours and they're running multiple medicals here in town, it was just getting to be a huge drain on the morale of the guys and manpower. There were safety concerns as they were putting people on the road in the middle of the night after they had worked a 48-hour shift or were getting towards the end of their 48-hour shift, possibly in the middle of the night and possibly on bad roads. The biggest concern was the morale and stability of the crew because they were looking at losing some people and they did lose some people through that period.

Today, Logan County Ambulance is responsible for all 911 calls in the county. They have mutual aid agreements with Weld, Washington, and Phillips Counties. Ninety percent of their calls are within a five- or six-mile radius of the City of Sterling. They made 3,100 calls last year. With the staffing they have right now, it's almost a daily occurrence for staff to have two different ambulances out on two different calls at the same time. It's probably a weekly occurrence where they have all three of the ambulances out on calls at the same time. For a small system, they are a very busy 911 system.

Commissioner McBride stated that his proposal at this point is to go back to establishing an EMS authority that would work on the ballot measure and getting some people that are specialized in EMS to sell it to the public. He suggested Jerry Casebolt and Tracy Yahn as two people who could get a team together that is knowledgeable about the ambulance service to look at the ballot issue and make sure that it will have enough sales tax to be successful. The county cutting one mill levy will help a little bit to sell it, but it's a big PR campaign for the ambulance and fire department.

Chief Ritter explained that the 2010 ballot issue campaign was also when Life Care Medical was the ambulance service. That whole campaign got kind of ugly and messy. It was hard to get good information out to the public. Ritter explained that he was not a captain at that time, he was an engineer and did not have a lot to do with the ballot issue. Chairman Brownell commented that people are now used to the current system and see how well works and they see it is a more efficient way to fund it and provide all the services we need.

Chief Ritter stated if the IGA is going to be a system like it is now, fire-based, which he thinks is a good system, the transfers are obviously going to be a big part of the discussion. It almost needs to be a separate EMS only division so the guys that are doing the 911 work are not doing those long-distance transfers in the middle of the night. We could have people that are working twelve-hour shifts doing transfers. It could be a way for them to hire new EMTs and new paramedics. They could grow in the system as firefighters if they wanted to or stay in EMS if that's where they are happy.

Chief Ritter mentioned the panel of people that could be brought together to help get a ballot issue publicized and passed. He agreed that Tracy Yahn would be a good person to have on the

panel with her work on the ambulance. Commissioner McBride suggested Carol Brom as she was very involved with the first ballot issue. Commissioner Sonnenberg suggested someone with political experience and the group accepted his offer to volunteer. Commissioner Sonnenberg said he would agree to volunteer if Caitlin Baseggio, Chamber of Commerce Director would also agree to be a part of the panel to encourage community involvement. She agreed. Alan Samber mentioned Jeff Schanhals of RETAC was part of the last panel. Chief Ritter noted that Schanhals is retiring this year. He does not know if his replacement has been hired. Brett Dowis is on the Colorado RETAC. Chief Ritter will contact someone from the Health Department. There are five rural fire chiefs that should be represented. A member from the rural fire boards from each of the fire departments from Fleming, Crook, Peetz, Merino and Sterling will be invited as well. Stan Kaiser was the president of the board when the IGA was signed and allowed it to go forward. Bob Blake was involved as well.

Commissioner McBride asked Alan Samber to prepare the paperwork for the IGA. He asked Chief Ritter if the ambulance service would be considered “state of the art” Chief Ritter said it is a state-of-the-art system. There are a couple of technologies that are just now coming out that they don’t have on the ambulances. However, their monitors are the latest available, the LUCAS devices that they use for CPR are the latest. They have video intubation now, so you can look at a screen and see the cord, they have very good, state-of-the-art equipment.

The original ballot issue funded the ambulance district with a sales tax. The thinking was that would spread the tax over people that were visiting the county as well as those that live here. Those that were coming in off I76.

The Board discussed whether cutting the property tax and funding with the sales tax would fund the initiative. The group agreed to coordinate a meeting of those that were mentioned for the panel and have initial discussions. Commissioner McBride will ask Jerry Casebolt to set up the initial meeting and give him the list of those people who were discussed.

Alan Samber asked if the ambulance service IGA was going to be extended for one year along with the rest of the other IGAs that are already in place. Samber noted that the server platform IGA expires at the end of May. The server platform expiration date will be changed so that it coincides with the rest of the IGA expiration dates. Alan said he will work with the City Attorney to have the resolution for the Commissioners to sign to approve the extension of the IGAs ready for May 21st.

COMMUNITY CENTER BUILDING EXPANSION – Commissioner McBride asked Rick Cullip when the Community Center Building is expected to be finished. He would like to plan a grand opening party. Cullip said his deadline is to have it finished before the fair. They were ready to put the porch on and noticed that there was one column that was eight inches off. They have to demo that pillar and rebuild it. It was in the blueprints that way. The bricklayers noticed it but built it according to the prints. The blueprints have been wrong multiple times. The architect/engineering firm that was hired by the county has made multiple errors and has missed multiple things in the drawings and has cost the county thousands of dollars.

Cullip noted that the groundwater information was supplied to (Cairn) the architect/engineer, and caused a problem with the foundation which cost the county an additional \$4,000. Cairn said the report “didn’t really address it”, when it states in the report that we have high groundwater. Other things along the way, like the beam that was supposed to be going down the center of the room, because of how the joist beam grows and gets smaller and then larger again, there's no way to install that request. The beam had to be moved over by the door to get it out of the way. That ended up causing a change order because it wasn’t designed like that, so it cost the county more money.

Commissioner Sonnenberg asked if the engineer designed the beams of the structure or if the county hired Buildings by Design to put up a certain sized building. Cullip believes that it was dropped by the architect. They assumed a normal structural beam is going to be large on the outside and get smaller as it connects. Cairn did not consider the builder, the company that is supplying the beams to be Chief, and the type of beams that Chief produces. Commissioner Sonnenberg said it may be hard to argue that point, because they designed it and the county put it out for bid and they came in with a different structure. But the water issue, pillars in the wrong spot and plumbing in the wrong spot, where we have to tear out and redo the piping, those types of things are all concerns.

Cullip added that there is no remediation plan for the final product as far as what the addition is to look like. There was no ADA railing built into it because we already have an ADA ramp that’s clear over on the east side. We’re going to make people park in front of the brand-new building and make them go all the way over to use the ADA ramp when we have a perfect spot to put it, but it wasn’t designed that way. It’s just little things the architectural and engineering firm missed. Alan Samber stated that they do have professional standards that they have to meet as architects and engineers. If they didn’t meet them, they can be found guilty of malpractice themselves, he does not know if this rises to that level. He asked if the architect has been fully paid at this point. Commissioners McBride and Sonnenberg believe that they are fully paid. In fact, they were paid extra to come back out. Samber said that there is nothing wrong with having a conversation with them and letting them know that the county is unhappy with their work and see what if anything they will do about it. The county needs to document everything that had to be redone and let them how much it cost because of their plans.

COURTHOUSE WATER DAMAGE UPDATE – Cullip stated that CTSI has confirmed that an adjuster will be assigned. He also stated that Peggy Michaels and staff were amazing to work with on Monday morning. Peggy was supportive and positive, and he wanted the Board to know that.

COURTHOUSE EAST STEPS MAINTENANCE REPAIRS – Rick Cullip updated the Board on the maintenance taking place on the stone steps on the east side of the Courthouse. He had a difficult time getting a contractor to look at the project. It is such a small project that most masons did not want to bother with it. The local mason wasn’t interested in the project. The same crew that is doing the pillars at the new community center at the fairgrounds gave him a proposal, so he hired them to do the job.

LANDFILL SUPERVISOR – Diana Korbe joined the Board to discuss the Landfill Supervisor position. Josh (Klein) passed his MOLO (Manager of Landfill Operations). This was a requirement for him to be considered for the Landfill Supervisor position. The other part will be to complete a review which Commissioner Brownell is going to do with him. Diana asked the Board if they wanted to promote him to Landfill Supervisor. Commissioner McBride stated that things have been going well at the landfill and he would be in favor of the promotion. The promotion would be in effect with the next payroll which would be 5/20/24. Commissioner Brownell noted that they have communicated several times a week. He is learning the state and federal testing and reporting that must be done. We have a consulting firm that comes out and helps us stay on track with well testing and gas testing requirements. The yearly inspection is coming up in June with a newly hired inspector. CDPHE came down and did a tire audit. The Board discussed whether the position should be kept as an exempt position. He will need someone to oversee things while he is on vacation or sick. There are landfill Operator One employees that could possibly be promoted Operator Two positions when Josh feels comfortable to do this. Commissioner Brownell will visit with him about salary.

Commissioner Sonnenberg asked whether the Board should be doing evaluations for the department heads that they supervise. Diana told the Board that some departments do them but not all the departments do evaluations for their employees. DHS does do employee evaluations. The Personnel Board has discussed taking out the section on evaluations from the Employee Handbook, but it has been left in. It used to be tied with merit raises. Merit raises have not been given for some time.

RESOLUTION TO CANCEL TAX LIENS ON ERONEOUS MINERAL INTEREST – The Board discussed a memo from Patty Bartlett requesting cancellation of tax liens on mineral interests that have been sold at the tax sale. The underlying assessment is incorrect with wrong legal descriptions or some other erroneous assessment. When those are identified, a resolution cancelling the liens is passed. If the lien is held by a third person, we refund the amount of money they invested.

TOWN OF CROOK - Commissioner McBride received another call from the Councilmember in Crook Colorado that met with the Board several weeks ago. He explained to him again that the Commissioners do not run things in the Town of Crook, the county does nothing with water and wastewater in the town.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:07 a.m.