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# Stoddard County Commission Meeting - July 17, 2023

JULY 19TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Stoddard County Commission Meeting - July 17, 2023

The Stoddard County Commissioners opened their regularly scheduled Monday morning meeting with a prayer and Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Mathis stated, "We have a full house today!" There were more than 20 people in attendance for today's meeting.

### **Doug Lowery, Duck Creek Township**

Lowery asked if there are any rules in Stoddard County about placing speed limit signs in the townships or if the Commissioners have anything to do with that directly.

Commissioner Mathis said he did not think the Commissioners had anything to do with that and that it was up to each individual township to post signs on rural roads within their township.

### **Katelyn Lambert - Weekly ARPA Update**

Duck Creek Township - They have a bridge they are working on and there may be some addition cost.

New Lisbon - They are waiting on the specs to pay on bridge 249

Castor Township - They are still needing a Distribution Agreement and several documents including bid procurement.

City of Dexter - Lambert is going thru the paperwork and is getting procurement paperwork from Crystal Bishop.

New Lisbon Township - Lambert is waiting for the bridge specifications on County Road 249 in order to proceed further.

Broadband/Internet - Lambert suggested sending the broadband project agreement to the county attorney for review. This agreement was brought in by Loyd Rice, GoSEMO Fiber and was for the Commissioners to look at as it and review.

Mark Crisel - Business Owner in Puxico and President of the Puxico Improvement Corporation said that the city of Puxico had been dealing with the internet or lath of internet for six years. He said the CDBG grant fell through and probably rightfully so due to the issues with the grant. He also said that the \$1 million in ARPA funds ear marked for the broadband should be given to still earmarked for broadband.

"People in Puxico area are unable to conduct business from their homes," stated Crisel. "They must make drives into the city of Puxico to serve their customers or in the case of doctors they can't even make virtual calls from their homes."

"I would rather take this money and get everything out of it that we can vs waiting another three to five years in the future for any other grant/BEAD money and hope that someone bids on that project," continued Crisel. "Just on my county road there is one doctor, two insurance agents and three businesses. No other internet service provider has stepped up, not Sparklight, BPS, Windstream or even AT&T to help with this area."

Logan Lowery - Owner of Lowery Farms - "We can't even use our current internet to conduct online business or even run credit/debit cards sometimes because the available internet is such poor quality. Our kids will need internet and access to do their homework. We just want to get the ball rolling on getting internet!"

Steve Crisel - Puxico School Board Member - He asked about the map of the proposed broadband coverage for rural Puxico that was having on the wall in the Commission chamber by Loyd Rice with GoSEMO Fiber. Rice explained that the map was the 40 miles of which GoSEMO Fiber would provide coverts a s part of the 1 million dollar project. Rice said originally it was let to believe that there was an additional 30 - 35 miles that would also need broadband. This was from Conexon, the engineers for the CDBG grant; however he said he was hard pressed to find an additional 10 miles. he said this would provide serve to nearly the entire rural area. and would be a 12 month project once shovels are in the ground.

Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis said this was the first time the Commission had seen the map and said details with this project are being updated weekly. Which means what the commission can and cannot approve keeps changing.

Loy Rice, GoSEMO Fiber, informed the Commission that he was asked by his board of directors to start moving toward on an agreement with the County or they would need to pivot and move on to another project.

Linda Roberts - Concerned Citizen - She asked if the \$1 million was not spent on the broadband where would it be spent. Mathis said they only considered that move due to another grant being available. It is called the BEAD grant. The \$1 million could go towards other projects yet to be identified. Commissioner C.D. Stewart said that the BEAD grant was considered because the Commission thought there would be monies available to cover the expense of the project. They were not just going to pull the money for no reason; however the BEAD Grant may not be available for two or more years. "I work remotely from home and some days can't get internet and AT&T just doesn't help us. We need good internet, stated Roberts"

Commissioner Mathis asked Rice to get a final agreement from his board detailing what they would do or not do. Rice agreed and said it would be signed by him and his CEO. There was not space on the agreement for 12 signatures of the board. Mathis stated that was fine.

Peter Coutavas - Puxico City Alderman and Industrial Development Association (IDA) Director - "We have received a letter from GoSEMO Fiber with a commitment to wire up the city limits of Puxico."

City of Essex - The city of Essex has now requested ARPA funds for street repair within their city. They have been turned down the last two years for CDBG grants. The lowest project was a match of \$75,000. They are requesting \$50,000 in ARPA funds.

Commissioner Mathis stated your request is in the hopper, but there no guarantee at this point and he could make no promises.

Bell City Fire Dept - They asked for ARPA funds in January 2022 and were asked by the previous Commission to obtain other funding such as a CDBG grant from Bootheel Regional Planning Commission. The representative, John Scherer said a new station would give them room house all of their equipment in one place rather than run around town to multiple buildings to gather equipment. Their first attempt to get a grant failed and they are attempting again; however they were wondering if the money would still be available as they would not know until 2024 if they received the grant or not. Also was it worth it to go after that grant at prevailing rates and the project cost more or have to be

scaled back.

There request was for \$253,170.00 for the fire station and a safe room.

Lambert stated that on Friday, July 14th that the city of Dudley had provided a request for ARPA monies on October 7, 2021. They are not on the current spreadsheet created by Bootheel Regional Planning Commission. The County is ok on the money thus far for paying out ARPA funds; however going forward if they paid out all requests they would be negative \$669,135.76. They have received more requests than funds available.

Lambert provided the Commission with an updated lists of requests and those that had been approved and paid out. The total amount of ARPA funds was \$5,637,766.00 They have received /the Commission has earned \$130,038.80 in interest from placing funds in money market accounts. Funds requested are at \$6,436,940.56. They have paid out \$799,856.17 thus far.

### **Beau Bishop - Stoddard County EMA Director**

He passed out two funding proposals for ARPA Funds. The first was for the outdoor warning siren upgrade. He said this proposal intends to extend the life of the sirens. Total cost of the proposal is \$78,000.

The second was the MOSWIN Radio funding proposal. This proposal intends to provide MOSWIN Radios to the county fire departments and emergency medical responders as they provide public safety duties to the citizens and travelers in Stoddard Count.

He said, "If everybody got on board with this project it would open additional channels for easier communication. The project budget is \$423,500. However this amount may be lowered because Josh Speakman, county collector stated that these radios have already been purchased for the city of Advance. This purchase was made independently from the proposal the EMA Director prepared.

### **Other Business**

Peter Coutavas - IDA - "The Wildflower has opened and it is a beautiful boutique. The store next to it will be a coffee shop." Also on North Prairie Street I have been working with Amy Haas, President of the Bloomfield Chamber and there will be a new business as well."

The Commission will close the Board of Equalization on Monday, July 26, 2023.

BRO Bridge Update - Mathis stated there were 7 bridges picked and Stoddard County was not chosen to have a bridge replacement.

Motion to accept the regular minutes from July 10, 2023 made by Commissioner Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to accept the Closed Session minutes from July 10, 2023 made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

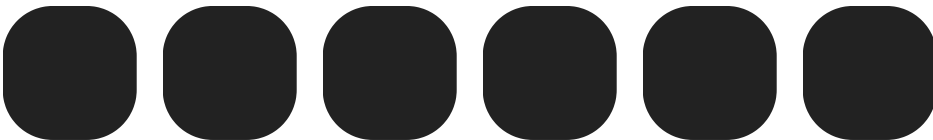
Motion to accept the Closed Session minutes from July 3, 2023 made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to enter into Closed Session at 12:17 p.m. made by Commissioner Jarrell, seconded by Commissioner Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

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