

## Barbour County Commission Meeting

Work Session

June 3, 2021

4:00 pm

**SUSIE CVECHKO COMMISSION PRESIDENT, JAMIE CARPENTER COMMISSIONER, DAVID STRAIT COMMISSIONER, SHANA FREY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Sharon Jean Clark, Bucky Poling, Steve Haynes, Mark Fink, Chris Ward, Shane Whitehair, Shayne Brown, Jennifer Burner, Eric Ruf, Brenda Hunt, Jennifer Piercy, Corey Brandon, Danny Bismark, Judy Edge, Kim Lewis, Traci Hoffman, Cathy Stemler, Sharon Miller, Jeremy Drennen, Dana Gould, Katie Wolpert, Phil Hart, Derek Hart

Susie Cvechko called the work session to order at 4:00pm.

The commission work session was held with in-person attendance and via conference call.

Susie Cvechko opened the meeting with an introduction to kickstart the opportunity to begin discussion and collaboration regarding the American Rescue funds that will be coming into Barbour County. In total, Barbour County is projected to receive a total of \$5.6 million. Recent publications indicate \$3.19 million to the County Commission; \$214,000 to the Town of Junior; \$790,000 to the City of Belington; and \$1.3 million to the City of Philippi.

Several informational meetings have been attended and multiple guidance revisions have been issued from the US. Treasury. The Interim Rule public comment period is open through July 9. An informational session held by Senator Manchin's office encouraged local and regional communication and collaboration in order to get beneficial and long-term results from these dollars.

Commissioner Cvechko discussed that State and Federal Representatives have indicated that additional funds may become available and the commission intends to proceed in a cautious manner.

US Treasury Guidance has indicated the following categories: support public health expenditures; address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency; replace lost public sector revenue; provide premium pay for essential workers; invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Commissioner Cvechko introduced Shane Whitehair, Region VII Planning and Development Council. He added that local governments are encouraged to invest in projects that are impactful and that will have positive impacts on communities. He reiterated that if a project is questionable with eligibility, seek guidance from government representatives and the US Treasury Department before proceeding.

Commissioner Cvechko opened the floor for comments.

Shane Whitehair, Region VII Planning & Development Council- local governments have infrastructure needs and projects that are in motion and some of these projects may align with the American Rescue Fund guidelines. Local and regional collaboration is encouraged.

Commissioner Cvechko mentioned that Broadband is one of the Commission's priorities.

Bucky Poling, Chestnut Ridge PSD- Water meters, technology and leak detected devices.

Katie Wolpert, City of Belington- upgrade to water meters. Also asked the question if funds can be matched with other programs. At this time, guidance says these funds cannot be used as matching funds for other federal programs.

Eric Ruf, Barbour Community Health Assoc., Question: Who will be the fiscal agent and who will decide how the dollars will be spent? Junior, Belington and Philippi municipalities will receive funds and the County Commission will receive funds. Each local government will decide how their funds will be utilized. Additional guidance could be issued in this regard. The County Commission plans to develop an application process for requests of their funds.

Jennifer Burner, Barbour County Health Department- Expressed the need for financial stability and sustainability. As a result of the pandemic, the Health Department has experienced significant financial strain and staff turnover. Items that would assist recovery include a new billing system and training, electronic health record management for an efficient operation and expanding services with the collaboration of other county organizations.

Jeremy Drennen, City of Philippi- The Reservoir project and various funding possibilities were discussed. Additional needs being considered include sewer, flush truck, street sweeper, and housing.

Judy Edge, Century Volga PSD- over the last year, they had several large repairs that were paid from their capital reserve account and would like consideration with lost revenue to replace these funds. They also have a need for meter replacement in their system.

Dana Gould, Broadus Hospital- Questioned if guidelines would support the hospital as a resource in emergency situations to include a generator that would operate on natural gas. Further guidance can be sought on this interest. Shane Whitehair added that these open discussions are positive because other programs may be available that could support needs that fall outside the American Rescue funding guidelines.

Shayne Brown, Barbour County EMS- Discussed how COVID has devastated emergency responding agencies, creating a delay of capital purchases. Their mission critical focus is replacing LUCAS devices and Lifepak monitors; however, funding is a barrier.

Derek Hart, Belington EMS- echoed similar concerns to upgrade their Lifepak monitors and explained that this purchase would be an investment that would provide benefit to Barbour County citizens.

Phil Hart, Belington Volunteer Fire Department- expressed that the pandemic has caused Belington and Junior Fire Departments significant loss of revenues because both departments depend on fundraising events to generate their funding in order to provide the community with emergency service. So far, no COVID funding has been available to benefit volunteer organizations with lost revenues. He discussed legislative items that require changes in order to benefit volunteer fire departments and concerns regarding safety and security in the Belington and Junior areas. He explained that Belington Fire Department utilizes their building for an Emergency Shelter. They would like consideration in funding to replace the failed HVAC system and install security cameras at both Belington and Junior Fire Departments. He would also like clarification if volunteer workers classify as essential workers.

Katie Wolpert, City of Belington- projects that have been in discussion include water meter replacement, repairs on the Mill Creek Reservoir, focus on their sewer system long-term control plan. She would like to see the broadband component have priority.

Corey Brandon, Barbour OEM- commented that while emergency services and health care were affected and struggled throughout the pandemic, they did not stop providing service. Barbour County has many projects that are needed in order to flourish, he would like to see prioritizing in order to get the most out of the funds.

In closing remarks, Commissioners Cvechko thanked for those who participated in the work session. She encouraged to think outside the box and additional work sessions will be planned.

The work session was adjourned at 5:16pm.