

Greene County Board of Commissioners
Thursday, October 21, 2021
1:45 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.

Those present: Dick Gould, Tom Koogler, Rick Perales, Brandon Huddleson, Lisa Hale, and Lisa Mock.

Mr. Koogler said he received commemorative and challenge coins and medals from a resident and thought they could be put on display in the lobby of the office. He said there are 173 coins from all over the world, and thought it would be a nice tribute to those who served. Mr. Perales said coins are a personal thing and, if done, the right words would need to be used for the commemoration.

Mr. Huddleson said he met with the County's attorney concerning the Kingwood Solar project and there will be a resolution on next week's meeting for the Board to consider.

He updated the Board on the Sebastian Hills Golf Course and some issues with a road. Athletes in Action reached the fundraising goal for the construction of the Wooten Center.

At 2 p.m., representatives from the Board of Elections (BoE), Llyn McCoy, Alisha Beeler and John Caupp, came to discuss additional space and salary increases for staff. Kenneth Henning, Secretary of State's Southwest Ohio Regional Liaison, was also present.

Mr. Caupp said during the 2020 election, there were challenges with early voting, real and perceived. According to Mr. Caupp, the Secretary of State put the BoE on notice that improvements and changes needed to be made with the handling of early voting and the early voting center. Because of the pandemic, stations needed to be separated and voters standing in line needed to maintain distance. He said lines to vote were outside, which is nothing new, and the wait was two to three hours. They were able to process voters in 57 seconds.

Mr. Caupp said the Secretary of State didn't think that was fast enough or efficient. The BoE was told to come up with solutions for more space. He said more and more people are voting early and the turn out for Gubernatorial and Presidential elections is large. This November will not be an issue, but next year's elections will be high voter turnout, he said.

According to Mr. Caupp, other Boards of Elections were contacted about how they handle voting and options for off-site voting. However, with off-site voting there are cyber and building security concerns, and there are Secretary of State requirements that must be met. Ms. McCoy said she spoke with Greene County Data Processing about moving voting off-site and the concern is not being able to keep voting secure.

Mr. Caupp said with the County receiving \$33 million from the federal government, what better way to use that money on than the Board of Elections for elections in the County. Ms. Beeler said voting is the cornerstone of our Republic. Mr. Koogler said the funding breaks down to \$16 million a year for two years.

Mr. Henning said other counties within his region have moved voting temporarily and experienced some issues, so it could be done. There are nine criteria to be met for security of elections, he said. Mr. Huddleson said Steve Tomcisin, Director of Data Processing, knows all the security requirements. Mr. Henning said there are also Federal requirements that need to be met. Ms. McCoy said the Department of Homeland Security issued a report that lighting needs to be improved as well as protection against a vehicle being rammed into the Board of Elections' building.

Mr. Caupp said currently for early voting, there are four stations, but the proposal is to have 10 stations. Having voters lined up in the parking lot is not good, but with more stations, more voters can be processed. According to Ms. McCoy, a 15-minute wait time is unacceptable based on guidance from the Secretary of State.

EXHIBIT C

Additional space at the Ledbetter Road facility was discussed. The BoE would like to utilize the Media Room since it is the largest open space at the facility. Ms. McCoy said the BoE would need larger space for 49 days for early voting. Mr. Huddleson said the Media Room space is widely used and there is no extra space available. Even if the Media Room was available, he said, it doesn't solve all of the issues. He said there would be an expense for wiring, the line in the hallway would impede other service providers at Ledbetter and there is the issue of parking and a glass-front building. According to Mr. Huddleson, the County doesn't have any empty buildings to utilize, and building a 40,000 square-foot building and purchasing six to 10 acres of land could possibly cost \$8 million to \$9 million.

Mr. Henning said while a new building would be marvelous, it can't be the only option. The Media Room is the most fiscally responsible option, he said. The possibility of temporarily moving early voting to a building on the Fairgrounds wasn't feasible because of the events held at the Fairgrounds and the concern over no dedicated fiber optic lines from Ledbetter to the Fairgrounds.

Mr. Perales said the County is working on a master plan for the entire County, and while it won't be done in time for what the BoE needs now, it will be included.

According to Ms. McCoy, 2020 was a perfect storm with the COVID-19 pandemic, a Presidential year, and absentee ballot requestors coming in to early vote. Mr. Henning said the Secretary of State's Office received hundreds of calls from Greene County voters about a two-hour wait time to vote in 2020, and the BoE didn't have the staff to address all the extra issues. He said there were tens of thousands of duplicate ballots sent out to registered voters. Mr. Caupp said the State Legislature should address not allowing unsolicited ballots being sent to voters.

The BoE is out of space to conduct elections and for the storage of equipment, Mr. Caupp said. It was suggested that the current space housing the BoE be better utilized and organized. Mr. Koogler said once that is addressed, they should let the Commissioners know what else is needed to help address the concerns. Mr. Henning said the BoE wanted to have some direction from the Commissioners.

Salaries for BoE employees were discussed. Mr. Huddleson said there isn't one office or department in the County who haven't faced issues with recruitment and retention of employees. He said the County's consultant is working on an update to the Classification/Compensation Plan and should have something available soon. But, he said, he can't give the Commissioners a deficit budget. Typically, there is a cost of living increase and maybe a little more, made available to departments under the Board and elected officials for distribution.

Mr. Caupp said they would like to bring salaries up to meet comparable counties, and he knows that is higher than what Mr. Huddleson has suggested. He said BoE clerks start at \$12.66 when others are making \$15 to \$16 an hour.

Mr. Perales said the employees are the County's most valuable asset, and the Board will see what happens wants the BoE has its budget meeting with Mr. Huddleson. Mr. Koogler said the Board looks at the whole County when it comes to salary increases. He said he isn't denying they need more money, but where does that come from.

Other items discussed: the STEAM Academy is interested in the former YMCA building and seeking assistance from the Greene County Port Authority. Mr. Gould suggested that once the Port Authority decides on its involvement with the project, then the Superintendent of Xenia Schools should be contacted as a courtesy.

Sinclair College is partnering with MacAir Aviation at the Greene County Airport for training and instruction to be professional pilots, Mr. Huddleson said, and while this is good news for the Airport, the Airport Authority didn't know about it.

EXHIBIT C

Discussion was held on a potential business in the Industrial Park. The County's mileage reimbursement policy will be reviewed and possibly changed, Mr. Huddleson said. The current County rate of reimbursement is \$.45 a mile, while the IRS reimbursement is \$.55 a mile. Mr. Perales suggested a reasonable rate be established.

Mr. Perales asked if there is anything else the Board needs to do for the proposed increase to the sales and use tax since election day is in a couple of weeks. Mr. Gould said he was told there isn't much money left in the Sheriff's PAC, but there will be ads on WBZI.

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Clerk Date

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities
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Case No(s). 21-0117-EL-BGN

Summary: Exhibit Applicant Exh 21 electronically filed by Mr. Ken Spencer on
behalf of Armstrong & Okey, Inc.