

CALHOUN COUNTY
PROCEEDINGS OF THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

January 29, 2009

The Special Session of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners convened at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, January 29, 2009 in Administrative Conference Room No. 3-700, County Building, 315 West Green Street, Marshall, Michigan.

Roll Call: Present: Comrs. Camp, Gerow, Haadsma, Rae, Rocho and Todd.

County Staff Present: Interim County Administrator Don Gilmer, Clerk-Register Anne Norlander and Deputy Clerk/Board Aide Mary Lou Barrett.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

A Moment of Silent Prayer was observed; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Comr. Rocho.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS:

7th District County Commission Candidate Interviews

Chairman Rae reviewed the interview procedure.

Ms. Jill Booth advised that she learned at 5:00 p.m. this evening that her previous job with the District Court is opening up, therefore, she had to make a difficult choice. Ms. Booth stated that she loved her job as Deputy Court Administrator/Attorney Magistrate, therefore, she shall withdraw as a candidate as there would be a conflict on interest. Ms. Booth apologized for the lateness of her notification and wished the Board well.

Candidate names were randomly drawn to determine interview order. All candidates were asked the same questions, as follows:

- 1) How much time do you have to devote to the job?
- 2) Do you intend to run for this office in the May 2009 Special Primary? If not, why not?
- 3) What ideas might you have to provide services more efficiently and with diminished costs, given the challenge of lower state revenues?
- 4) What third party, besides Calhoun County and Emmet Township, do you believe should most reasonably become the third Casino Revenue Sharing partner? Why?

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

- 5) Once the Firekeepers Casino is up and running, what would you recommend the County's revenue share be spent for? Why?
- 6) Why do you think you are the best qualified candidate to represent the 7th Commission District?
- 7) What have you done thus far in the area of community service to demonstrate your commitment to the citizens of the 7th District?
- 8) Why do you seek this appointment; what are your goals for the office?
- 9) What are the experiences that you feel prepare you for this appointment as representative for District 7?
- 10) What is one characteristic about you that you feel makes you uniquely qualified to represent District 7?

Responses by Candidate Barbara Frederick:

- 1) I will devote whatever time it takes. I think that it is important to the citizens of the 7th District. The residents within District 7 need someone on the Board that represents them to the best of their ability, therefore, I do not have a problem with donating my time to the Commission.
- 2) I have picked up a packet. My intention is yes, I shall probably run. I have not made a final decision yet, however, my hope is yes to run for the position.

Comr. Camp requested clarification, inquiring "If appointed, you would not run?"

Ms. Frederick responded "No, I'm not saying that."

- 3) I'm not really sure because the county has had a lot of cuts in the past several years, even when I was on the Board we were really being cut because of decreased state revenues. I think the best you can do is try to use the funds as wisely as possible and keep the costs down. I think that the best thing for the Commission is to track department expenditures. As far as keeping costs down, I am not sure at this point, other than doing what you are doing now to keep the costs down. If you cut too much, one person is doing the work of two or three other employees. I am not advocating that you cut employees because I don't think you have enough employees now.
- 4) Battle Creek City and Marshall Township.

Comr. Haadsma inquired "Which one?"

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

Ms. Frederick responded “I’m not 100 percent sure. Perhaps it would be a good idea to do it on a rotating basis between the two. I realize Battle Creek is the largest entity, and probably will be the one chosen; however, the Township has great interest in being a part of that. I don’t know who I would chose, however, a rotating basis is a good idea.”

- 5) Definitely, infrastructure or the roads. I realize that a lot of that is the Michigan Department of Transportation’s responsibility however. I think education for the people that will be using the casino so that they don’t get themselves into financial problems. I think that part of that money could go to the schools, health care. I believe that the Health Department could definitely use some of that money because some areas like Albion and Homer could certainly use more help than they are getting now.
- 6) I’m very active in the 7th District. I am on many committees. I do a lot of work with the citizens and believe I have a great feel of the issues that the Board deals with after eight years of serving as a Commissioner. I work with the United Way, A.I.M. and Senior Apartments in Homer. People recognize the fact that if they need help, they can call me, and they still do.
- 7) One of the committees that I belong to is the Albion Business and Professional Women’s Association which assists non-profits and charities, and educates women in women’s issues. I sit on the Board of Albion Interfaith Ministries (AIM), which is a non-profit, run by volunteers utilizing donated funds. I also sit on the Calhoun County Community Corrections Advisory Board that helps inmates and attempts to keep the jail population down. I sit on the Workforce Development Chief Executive Officers Board and have during and since I have left the Commission as the business representative authorized by the Albion Chamber of Commerce.
- 8) I believe that it is important that the 7th District have someone who is visible to them, that works for them, that they can trust, and who listens to their problems. I have done that, not even being a Commissioner. I think I can help the people. I am active now and they recognize that, and I have credibility. My goal is to do the best job for the county and my district that I can with the budget that we have. I think we have to be very cognizant of the fact that we have a limited budget and have a lot of citizens that really depend on us and need us.
- 9) My experience as Commissioner. I have a lot of contact with the citizens and attend a lot of their meetings; i.e., township meetings. I have a lot of experience with people in the Albion and Homer areas.
- 10) I care about the citizens. I am trustworthy. I tell the truth, and I will do the best I can to represent them.

Responses by Candidate Kirk Lee:

- 1) I am President of the Albion Public School Board, and do not work on Thursdays, and Tuesday afternoons, therefore, Thursdays are available to me to attend the Commission meetings. This is

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

something that I will devote my time to. I have had an interest in the seat since Mr. Solis ran for the office. I have time to visit the people in my district.

- 2) Yes. I have all the signatures, and have everything done, and plan on doing it. It is my full intent of going through the entire process.
- 3) I think to say something with not fully understanding the different county agencies that the county funds, getting a better understanding of the budget and knowing what are the high priorities, understanding what services we can look at, other avenues, that I really don't have a good idea of what we can do not knowing the policies and the sources of funding.
- 4) Albion because of the community's financial needs. Albion has been hit hard with loss of businesses; e.g., Harvard Industries, the hospital, the Kmart; and because of that aspect of being on the east side, it would spread the money out more.
- 5) One of the things I know, they are establishing a committee and that two percent from the machines shall be shared. Regarding that money, I think it needs to go through the General Fund budget. I think it needs to be disbursed through that budget and review of the programs that require funding.
- 6) I have been in the district for over 28 years. I have a lot of experience and am active in both of my professional organizations and have held a number of positions through them, therefore, I'm familiar with the process. I have the time to devote to it and I'm not afraid of making decisions. I think I can bring in some leadership as I listen well and believe that I can work with the Board as a whole.
- 7) I'm on the school board and active with the schools. Before I became part of the school board I was the head football coach for Albion for four years. I have participated in fund raising, the National Honor Society, and active with the recreation department in assisting with some of their projects. Both my wife and I are active in the community.
- 8) I seek it to bring representation to our district. Regarding goals, leadership to assist the Board so that we can be an excellent Board for the county. This is something I have wanted to do and I have political interests in the future. I would like to run for a Senate seat. I know there is still much to be learned at the local level. I am willing to spend the time to do that.
- 9) I know the people in my community and my district as a whole. Experience with the school board and working for my state organization has helped to develop my leadership and communication skills.
- 10) I am not afraid to make decisions and voice my opinion, but my best asset is, I'm a good listener.

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

Responses by Candidate Leonard Smith:

- 1) One hundred percent. Currently I'm unemployed.
- 2) It really depends upon the outcome tonight I guess. If you choose someone you feel is better, I will definitely not run against them.
- 3) I have just my 40 years of working, paying taxes and farming. I don't have any answers because I am not that politically involved. I was on the Homer Township Board for eight years in the late 1980's or early 1990's, and nothing since.
- 4) I would guess Marshall Township or the City of Battle Creek. Probably Marshall Township because of its proximity to the casino.
- 5) My personal opinion, the roads are the number one priority.
- 6) I don't believe that I'm the best, but I have a lot of experience in everything, through manufacturing and the Homer Township Board. I would do the best that I can.
- 7) Just recently, or in my last 50 years?

Chairman Rae responded "In your last 50 years."

Mr. Smith responded, "I was a part-time policeman in Homer Village for 15 years. I started as a patrolman and worked myself up to Assistant Chief. I worked with the new Chief for one and a half years until my other job at Miller Brothers forced me to devote more time there. I worked on the Homer Township Board after that for eight years, appointed for almost four years and elected for another four years. I was Manufacturing Manager at Miller Brothers."

- 8) There was an ad in the paper, and it is something I have not done; and I'm close to retirement and have the time to spend. What I could do for the office, I really don't know because I have not been at Commission meetings ever. I am new.
- 9) My experiences being in the Homer area for 40 to 50 years. I don't have any special skills other than common sense.
- 10) I'm honest, fair, willing to listen to every side, working knowledge of manufacturing. I supervised 150 people and you have to be open and honest with them. Being honest is the best thing.

Responses by Candidate Maurice Barnes, Jr.:

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

- 1) Whatever time necessary that it takes. I care about the 7th District.
- 2) Yes, I do. I have 60 some signatures here now, and I was going to check in and see if they wanted me to cancel 10 of them out because I think they said that you can only have between 20 to 50. I think I have enough.
- 3) With the crisis in the economic situation, not only in our county but nationally, I think we can be efficient and effective based on what is practical and the practices that are working in other districts, we can use some of those ideas. I am truly a team-concept player. I don't have all the answers, but if we all put our minds together there will be some conflict resolution that keeps everyone honest, then I think we can take that path. We can guarantee nothing, but we can also work towards any endeavor that we choose.
- 4) Well at this point, I am originally from Grand Rapids and it took ten years to get that through. I would have to do more research to answer that question because I'm not familiar with that.
- 5) Well I guess, taking a look at our infrastructure here; and I think more money should be put on what I call our back roads. Roads at this time; and if it could work its way into the school systems, I would like that too.
- 6) Well, I can't put myself into the position of saying that I'm the best. I haven't been privy to the other candidates. I have a masters degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix and a bachelors degree in arts and criminal justice from Michigan State University. My best asset, like I said is that I truly care and I can be available. I would like to articulate and influence the views of people in the 7th District here in Calhoun County. I'm truly concerned with the budget and the contracts that the Board of the County of Calhoun handles, and in the 7th District we have the same economic strife; so I feel that I want to represent the people and want to be elected by the people.
- 7) Okay, I'm actively involved in the Albion Interfaith Ministries and I also volunteer at the Community Action Agency. I do a lot of volunteer work. I volunteer at Albion Public Schools; e.g., tutoring kindergarten and the second grade.
- 8) Well to be truly honest, I was filing for the Albion Public School Board and I received the information regarding this seat being open in my district, so I decided to run. In Albion, in that part of the county it's very tough, and I think we need representation by someone who wants to be involved, someone who's willing to work on different committees. I think I've let the cat out of the bag. I'm truly interested in the budget and the contracts. I mean we have a very tough fiscal situation in America and the county, and I just want to be involved.
- 9) Well, truly life. I have had a diverse life and a diverse career, and it comes back to wanting to serve the public. I look at a guy whose my hero, and that is Franklin D. Roosevelt. He suffered from polio. I

Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009

like his type of management. He would bring in both the Republicans and the Democrats and he would cause conflict among them to get the best possible avenue he thought at the time. I feel that I can only use the best possible information that I have available at that time to help the Board make a decision. It's all about decision making as a team towards the plan of action that we decide to take. That's the best we can do.

- 10) I'm overly honest. I had a cousin who was a Albion Public School President and sometimes there became some conflicts, and I said "Well, why don't you just use some back door policies?" And she said, "There is no such thing." I said "I beg to differ." If there are six of us here right now, and this gentleman here has a platform and he does not feel that he is going to get it past the Board, he might just need to sit down with two of us and say "Hey, take a look at the position from where I am coming from," and see if he can influence or articulate that for us to see his point of view. But, honesty is my best asset.

Chairman Rae requested that the candidates attend the February 5 Board Meeting, advising that at that time the Board shall be making their decision.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Comr. Haadsma stated that he is impressed by the earnestness of all four of the candidates that gave their time and spoke today. Comr. Haadsma stated that he prefers one candidate, however, announced that he shall not vote for any candidate. Fairness and even-handedness are important factors tonight. Comr. Haadsma stated that in relation to the applicants not chosen, there exists the potential appearance of unfairness and uneven-handedness. Comr. Haadsma advised that he visited the Clerk's Office yesterday, and three of the four candidates have "pulled" campaign packets signaling an intention to run. Comr. Haadsma stated that if the fourth candidate were selected, he has until February 10 to run, and that he believes that the candidate would decide to run.

Comr. Haadsma pointed out that although this is an interim appointment, the applicant selected might have an advantage over the other candidates, campaigning as if the election in May and the election in August were a referendum on retention. Comr. Haadsma advised that his conscience has been "pricked" a multitude of times over the past several weeks, most recently just last night as he was driving and heard Dan Shore on the radio discuss the inherently undemocratic quality of the appointment process in relation to the four state governors appointing U.S. senators, and Mr. Shore continued to describe the selection process as "subject to manipulation."

Comr. Haadsma stated that his wish is for the 7th District voters to decide whom should represent them, without his presumptive selection. Comr. Haadsma advised that he shall certainly support the choice that he intends to advocate for in a democratic way by going door to door and getting out the vote; however, shall not preemptively select any of the four candidates. Comr. Haadsma advised that he intends to abstain from voting upon selection of a candidate.

**Board of Commissioners
SPECIAL SESSION
January 29, 2009**

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m. at the call of the Chair.

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