



**Board of Commissioners – Work Session
May 6, 2024, at 3:00 PM
Room 108, Spalding County Annex Building
Minutes**

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Monday, May 6, 2024, at 3:00 pm in the Spalding County Annex Room 108, with Chairman Clay Davis presiding. Commissioners Rita Johnson, James Dutton (arrived at 3:11 PM to make a quorum), Gwen Flowers-Taylor (arrived at 3:16 PM), and Ryan Bowlden (arrived at 3:48 PM) were present for the meeting. Also present were County Manager, Dr. Steve Ledbetter, County Attorney, Stephanie Windham, and Deputy County Clerk, Ragan Jones, to record minutes.

I. OPENING (CALL TO ORDER)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Clay W. Davis.

PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

II. INVOCATION delivered by

Dr. Ledbetter delivered the Invocation.

III. PLEDGE TO FLAG led by

Commissioner Rita Johnson, District #3, led the Pledge to the Flag.

Motion/Second by Davis/Johnson to include an amendment to the agenda to include discussion to amend the agreement between the Spalding County Sentence Enforcement and the Spalding County State Court to supervise probationers under Agenda Item #8. Motion carried a unanimous vote.

IV. Agenda Items

1. MSI Benefit Group Presentation

Ashley Gilder, the Employee Benefits Consultant for Spalding County through MSI Benefits Group, oversees the management of benefits plans. The renewal process for July 1 involves initiating comprehensive market evaluations, including an overview of market analysis and recommendations for the benefits plan for the upcoming year.

During the 2023-2024 renewal debrief, it was noted that the county operates as a self-insured provider, paying fixed costs for administrative expenses and funding claims as they occur each month. Last year, there were no changes to employee benefits or deductions.

The biggest change last year was the transition from Cigna Express Scripts to Veracity ProCare for pharmacy services. However, there were no changes to the dental and vision plans, which were renewed with Cigna, and the life/disability plan renewed with Anthem.

A health plan spend analysis was conducted, which included examining total fixed costs comprised of administrative network fees and stop-loss premiums, compared to the maximum claim's liability. As of May 6, 2024, the medical loss ratio was at 46.8%, well below the target of 80%.

The transition to Veracity ProCare for pharmacy services has resulted in significant savings opportunities, with projected savings of \$1,000,000 by year-end. However, concerns were raised about the challenges employees faced in accessing critical medications, particularly for diabetes and cholesterol.

Moving forward, the county aims to promote wellness programs such as the Basic Life/Wellness Program, which currently provides benefits at no cost to employees. Around 15% of employees are currently participating in these programs, and efforts will be made to increase participation.

Despite the challenges faced during the pharmacy transition to Veracity ProCare, the county has addressed many issues, and only new hires requiring specialty medications will face additional hurdles. The county will continue to provide support and assistance to employees navigating these processes.

The medical loss ratio was explained as the comparison between the maximum claims liability and the actual claims paid under the stop-loss contract. This ratio helps underwriters assess the financial performance of the plan and determine renewal offerings. The renewal process for July 1, 2024, involves initiating comprehensive market evaluations, including an overview of market analysis and recommendations for the benefits plan for the upcoming year.

A recommendation is to switch from Anthem to Ulliance for the employee assistance program (EAP). Ulliance offers licensed counselors and a critical incident stress team that can be deployed on-site within 24 hours.

Chief Mike Byrd highlighted the current limitations of the state-provided critical debriefing services, with only two employees in the entire state of Georgia specializing in critical incident stress management for police and fire departments. Additional resources from Ulliance would be beneficial in providing timely support after incidents.

'Know The Cost' also offers a radiology program with no fees, providing up to four visits for imaging services such as MRI, ultrasound, PET scans, and CT scans, billed directly as claims with no charge to the employee.

Another potential benefit is the option to cover FDA-approved weight loss medications, providing additional support for employees' health and well-being.

Overall, the recommended benefit changes would result in a total annual cost of \$7.1 million, representing a decrease of \$550,000 from the previous year.

2. Review of MOU for Archway

During the review of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Archway, several concerns and suggestions were addressed. Mrs. Windham noted that there were no changes in the MOU from year to year.

Dr. Ledbetter outlined various projects undertaken by Archway, including creating parks and revamping leadership classes. However, there were concerns among several of the Commissioners about the lack of community involvement and transparency within Archway.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor suggested expanding Archway's involvement to other groups and authorities, expressing how she feels disconnected from Archway. Suggestions were made to ensure that all authorities using Archway's services contribute financially and that changes be made to the decision-making process.

Mrs. Windham emphasized the need for more communication from Archway professionals.

Dr. Ledbetter recommended that Chairman Davis take feedback to the Archway Executive Committee about partners helping financially.

3. Discussion with SCWA regarding IGA.

Kirby Glaze from Hecht Walker Jordan, Law Firm provided background information on the Spalding County Water Authority. The Water Authority Board and Board of Commissioners decided several years ago that it would be more efficient for the county to provide employees to operate the functions of the water and sewerage facilities. As the authority and services have grown, there is a desire to transition to a truly independent, autonomous legal entity without adversely impacting current employees. A bridging document has been prepared to facilitate this transition over time. Under this arrangement, employees would remain employees of the county to provide benefits with the Water & Sewerage Facilities Authority reimbursing the county for all expenses associated with the employees, space, utilities, etc. From a management standpoint, these employees would report to the general manager of the authority, who would in turn report to the Authority. The aim is to establish clear rules regarding independence versus alignment with the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor raised a concern regarding Water Authority employees reporting to the general manager and falling under the county's personnel policy and pay scale. She expressed that salaries should not be affected by the county's pay scale.

Mr. Glaze clarified that while employees would not fall under the county's pay scale, they would be subject to the county's personnel policy for matters such as leave and sick leave. It was reiterated that the intention of this arrangement is to define the relationship between the county and the authority.

4. BOC Mid-Year Retreat

Chairman Davis stated that the Board of Commissioner's Mid-Year Retreat was originally scheduled for May 10th. The question arose of any immediate issues prompting the need for rescheduling, especially before the millage rate discussions in August or September.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor reflected on the last retreat, there was a consensus that it shouldn't end with unresolved issues or lingering tensions. It was suggested that the retreat be scheduled after the budget is passed, as there is a need to establish measurements of progress and assess the gap between status and desired outcomes.

Commissioner Dutton pointed out that scheduling the retreat around the halfway mark of the year could be beneficial.

Chairman Davis proposed to schedule the retreat between August 1-15, 2024, with plans to engage facilitators for assistance.

5. Budget Update

Dr. Ledbetter presented the proposed budget for FY 25, emphasizing transparency regarding departmental operational costs. He shared supplemental budgets outlining items necessary to elevate the level of services provided to the community.

The proposed budget amounts to \$70,128,565, inclusive of decompression raises approved by the Board. This represents a \$2,923,600 increase in expenditure compared to the previous year. Key areas of change include workers' compensation, the law library, gasoline, electricity, vehicle insurance, the aquatic center, and the Historic Township of Sunnyside. Anticipated revenue, with the millage rate staying at 15.588, is expected to increase by an estimated \$3,243,523. It was noted that out of the 75 supplemental items, funding is available if Fiscal Year 24 funds are rolled into the Fiscal Year 25 budget.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor expressed concerns about the absence of transportation in the budget for FY 25, suggesting the implementation of a fixed bus route system to ensure accessibility for children and seniors from each recreation park. Implementing a fixed bus route system could also open opportunities for funding from Three Rivers.

6. Pay Study Update

Chairman Davis emphasized that the pay study is being conducted to address compression issues within the county. Compression refers to the situation where employees' salaries are too close together regardless of their experience or tenure. However, the current issue is not about giving everyone a raise but about addressing compression by adjusting salaries to ensure they are competitive in the market based on experience and tenure.

Dr. Ledbetter highlighted key study considerations, emphasizing that no employees would experience a salary decrease. The recommendation aims to bring all employees to a market competitive position based on their experience and tenure. It's important to note that this adjustment increases the overall payroll but is not considered a raise. The focus is on decompressing the organization to address salary discrepancies. While most employees will see an increase, there are some at the top end of their salary range who may not receive a raise. The largest percentage of adjustments is allocated to departments such as the sheriff's office, fire department, and 911 services.

7. Discuss agreement for Airport Engineering Design and/or Planning Assistance between Georgia Department of Transportation and City of Griffin, Spalding County, and Griffin-Spalding County Airport Authority.

Stephanie Windham, County Attorney, provided an update on the agreement from Georgia Department of Transportation to begin funding for the design of the new airport. This funding is part of the FY24 state money and not the \$47,200,000 million that we will be receiving. The local match required is \$35,000. It was recommended by the airport authority staff that the \$35,000 come out of the interest-bearing account.

8. Discuss amending the agreement between the Spalding County Sentence Enforcement and the Spalding County State Court to supervise probationers.

Judge Thacker presented the amendment between the Spalding County Sentence Enforcement and the Spalding County State Court, it also addresses an amendment between Spalding County Sentence Enforcement and the Spalding County Superior Court. A proposed change to modify fees for defendants. This adjustment involves increasing the cost of drug testing to ensure adequate funding of these services. Also, a modification of the felony intake fee to align with the state-ordered \$50.

V. Adjournment

Motion/Second by Flowers-Taylor/Bowlden to adjourn the meeting at 5:46 p.m. Motion carried by a unanimous vote. This time was from the Regular BoC meeting – please adjust.

/s/ _____
Clay W. Davis, Chairman

/s/ _____
Steve Ledbetter, PhD., County Clerk