

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Work Session
February 27, 2024
4:00 P.M.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Gene King, Vice Chairman Adam Worsley, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Bryan Threadgill.

Commissioners Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Interim County Administrator Theron Gay, Assistant County Administrator Blue Cole, Deputy Clerk Allyson Stephens, and Finance Director John Gorton,

Staff Absent: County Clerk Beverly Thomas and County Attorney Michael Hill

Council Members City of Manchester Present: Mayor Mark Trimble, Mayor Pro Tem Quardez Warrior, Council Member Meka Lowe, Council Member Danny Wadsworth, and Manchester City Clerk Angel Fowler.

I. WELCOME

Chairman Gene King welcomed everyone to the Work Session called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Chairman King stated the purpose of the Work Session was to be a Joint Session with the City of Manchester to discuss the Recreation Intergovernmental Agreement between the two parties. Chairman King stated the purpose of the Work Session is not to discuss the future of recreation but to discuss whether we continue our Intergovernmental Agreement with Manchester, while we work on future recreation planning. Chairman King stated started in the next couple of months, Work Sessions will be held with all the municipalities to discuss recreation going forward. Chairman King stated everyone's input will be needed at that time to help develop a plan to provide recreational opportunities to all citizens of Meriwether County. Chairman King thanked everyone for being in attendance. Mayor Mark Trimble called the Work Session to order for the City of Manchester at 4:02, and acknowledged they had a quorum.

II. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion of Proposed Recreation Agreement with the City of Manchester. The Board of Commissioners introduced themselves along with their district. In attendance was Chairman Gene King, District 1, Vice Chairman Adam Worsley, District 5, Commissioner Rosla Plant, District 2, Commissioner Emmett Collins, District 3, and Commissioner Bryan Threadgill, District 4. The City of Manchester introduced themselves as well. In attendance was Mark Trimble, Mayor, Quardez Warrior, Mayor Pro Tem, and Danny Walton, City Council Member. Interim County Administrator Theron Gay stated that in November of 2015, Meriwether County and the City of Manchester entered into an Agreement to provide recreation service to all areas of the County. Interim Administrator Gay stated the original term was to end in November of 2020, but in May of 2019, both parties extended the Agreement for three additional years resulting in it ending in November of 2023. Interim Administrator Gay stated that because the contract was about to expire, Meriwether County reached out to Manchester and asked for consideration of extending the contract through 2024 to give everyone time to plan for recreation programs. Interim Administrator Gay stated the initial feedback from Manchester was the extension of the contract would require renegotiation with a substantial increase in County contribution and all programs being run out of Manchester. Interim Administrator Gay explained

that with the County not agreeing to those terms, the County proceeded to work toward continuation and expansion of our current program. Interim Administrator Gay explained that with a change in leadership in Manchester, the City is willing to accept the extension under the same terms and conditions for 2024 and get together and work on plans for the future. Interim Administrator Gay stated if this was agreed upon, it would be noted in the agreement that any future agreement or extension beyond December 31, 2024, would require a renegotiation and reallocation of funds, basically starting over in negotiating contracts. Interim Administrator Gay stated in meeting with our County Recreation staff and the City of Manchester, he feels both share a common long-term goal, but disagree on the best approach to get there. Interim Administrator Gay stated that he felt the understanding is there will need to be countywide recreation at some point and also understand the need to involve all the other cities. Interim Administrator Gay stated the purpose of the Work Session today is to see if both parties want to extend the contract to December 31, 2024, under the same terms and conditions, which would be the first option. Interim Administrator Gay stated that whether this is decided on or not, it is important that everyone sit down and decide on the future of recreation, because if we don't, everyone will be back in the same discussion next year. Another option would be extension of the agreement through 2024 but modifying the conditions. For example, since we are about to be 6 months into our budget year and 4 months since the agreement expired, consideration could be given to reducing the contribution amount. Interim Administrator Gay stated the third option would be not approving the agreement and simply moving forward with the County Recreation program. Mr. Gay emphasized that whichever way it is decided, it needs to be done with the understanding that we must use the remaining time of 2024 for planning of 2025, and this is going to involve meeting with all municipalities to develop a plan to serve all of Meriwether County. Interim Administrator Gay stated that without deciding the future of Meriwether County, we will be right back discussing the same issues. Interim Administrator Gay stated that today's conversation should be limited to Meriwether County and the City of Manchester but wanted everyone to understand that Meriwether County will be getting back with all municipalities as everyone needs to have input into Recreation. Chairman Gene King stated the he wanted to make it known that no action would be taken in the Work Session, and this was just a discussion. Vice Chairman Worsley wanted to be clear on the third option, not approving agreement and simply moving forward with the County recreation program is in a future tense as there is currently not a county recreation program that does not include this agreement. Interim Administrator Gay stated the agreement actually expired in November. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he understands but say we don't want this and move forward with the county recreation program, there is not one at this date it will be the generation and building of one. Interim Administrator Gay explained there is one today and won't say it is formalized, but we do have one that runs out of Woodbury that has a lot of teams, ball players, and use of the gymnasium. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that is not a County Recreation Program. Commissioner Bryan Threadgill stated that we have never approved that action. Chairman Gene King stated it is not Woodbury's, it is recreation that Randy Carter and different ones have been working with Theron and Blue to oversee and right now there are 164 players signed up with 14 teams to play ball. Commissioner Threadgill stated we have never approved of an actual County Recreation Department. Vice Chairman Worsley stated, so it is not funded by the County. Interim Administrator Gay stated it is funded by the County and if you look back at the original agreement it says in Section 2 that the County shall contribute \$120,000 dollars per year to the Recreation Program, but this amount does not include the cost of existing County Personnel that

will be dedicated to the Recreation Program. Interim Administrator Gay explained that in the event that Meriwether County Recreation positions become vacant, and at one time we had a Meriwether County Recreation Director, that the contribution would increase to \$150,000 dollars per year. Interim Administrator Gay explained that we have always ran programs in addition to the recreation program in Manchester. Vice Chairman Worsley asked how this was being funded and what it was coming out of, and if we are funding additional cities as well as Manchester. Interim Administrator Gay stated that in addition to the City of Manchester, we fund senior centers and have an extension of the recreation program that works out of Woodbury. That program has been in place since this was initiated. Interim Administrator Gay explained there were part-time employees who worked for the program and last year purchases were made for football helmets and other things. Commissioner Threadgill stated that did originate as part of the Manchester/Meriwether agreement and he doesn't know where that got to be it's own entity in Woodbury, because it was not voted on and he has been here 12 years and it wasn't like that. Interim Administrator Gay agreed that there had been no formal dedication of a program, but once we didn't have the continuation of agreement with Manchester, the Board stated they didn't want recreation to fall apart, so we continued it and there is a pretty strong program in Woodbury that's grown out of that. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he understands that and wants to make sure we're following the rules that we set forth and wanted to clarify that the County has already made a contribution of the budgeted amount that we agreed to last year to a program in this County already this year that is not in the contracted agreement that was voted on. Interim Administrator Gay stated it is not in the contracted agreement except for it says that none of this amount will be possible without the position of county personnel, and the County has always taken this contract, honored, and subsidized this contract, and everyone worked together up until contract expiration and the program has been very successful. Chairman King stated there had to be something in place because they just had basketball tournament that had 145-150 kids in different age groups playing basketball. Chairman King stated that the County had sent personnel to fix a waterline for the purpose of the activities. Interim Administrator Gay stated that the County has a lease on the gymnasium with the school system. Commissioner Threadgill stated the whole reason for the lease on the gym was because that was part of the contract with Manchester to have the Woodbury facility. Interim Administrator Gay stated that when he first came to the County, the Manchester contract had expired and the former Board hired a director who was working out of the gym in Woodbury, and he says working very lightly, with not much work being done, leaving the program in the same shape as when it started, however all this was done, and the program has been very successful. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he is trying to clarify because it gets a lot of heated discussion across the County and the perception of himself before becoming a Commissioner and to this moment having looked at this and understanding what's going on, we entered into an agreement explained as Manchester and Meriwether County working together as a cohesive recreation department, with Manchester having the resources and established program. Vice Chairman Worsley stated we have not used that and now informally entered into an agreement with the City of Woodbury, as perceived by the rest of the County. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he wanted everyone watching and listening to understand that we are now informally in an agreement with the City of Woodbury, not necessarily the city but the citizens of Woodbury for that recreation that we didn't vote and agree too. Chairman King explained that we leased the gym from the School for the use of the facility, but not for the City of Woodbury. Interim Administrator Gay stated it is part of the contracted program. Vice Chairman Worsley stated now we are funding that program outside of

this contract. Chairman King stated that when Manchester refused to sign the agreement in November, we had to do something or there would have been nothing, such as no basketball. Chairman King stated that hopefully we haven't done anything wrong, but we did something that would bless the kids. Interim Administrator Gay stated nothing had been done wrong and a gym was leased from the school system for the use of the facilities. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that that's why he wanted to get that out because it is a heated topic and the perception of some people is that we're paying the City of Woodbury to do a different recreation program, but not paying Greenville, Gay, or Luthersville, and wants to make sure the citizens understand exactly what Chairman King is saying, because if we hadn't taken any action there are 164 kids that wouldn't have the opportunity to do anything and we took some action to keep something going on. Commissioner Threadgill stated we didn't vote to take an action. Interim Administrator Gay explained that before an agreement was signed in 2015, the extent of the recreation program was one girls' softball game and the reason for doing this agreement was to expand recreation to all areas of Meriwether County. Interim Administrator Gay stated that some complained it was too far of a drive to Manchester, which fueled an extension in Woodbury. Interim Administrator Gay stated Vic Dowis and Randy Carter and others worked very closely together and did the work to open up opportunities for more children, by utilizing facilities. Interim Administrator Gay stated that his recommendation would be either continuing the contract or not, but there needs to be development and planning of a recreation program that includes all the cities. Interim Administrator Gay stated that the Board could do that by extending the contract through the end of the year or not, but a plan needs to be developed. Chairman King stated there are a lot of families and businesses involved in Woodbury, not the City of Woodbury program, but in the City, there are ballfields. Chairman King stated the Manchester fields are dirt, but the Woodbury fields are grass and when the seven-year-olds asked last year to practice on the Manchester fields they were told no. Chairman King stated what the parents did was volunteer and strip the grass and bring in dirt and now there are dirt fields equivalent to Manchester and they are looking forward to playing games. Interim Administrator Gay stated it would be ideal if the teams could play each other, but there are not enough participants to have a recreation program in each town. Interim Administrator Gay stated that before he came to Meriwether County he had heard of Vic Dowis and the wonderful job he had done and commended the City of Manchester for the program they had built. Commissioner Threadgill stated that the people needed to know for the record that the City of Manchester and the Council before them today, minus one that will be coming on in March, are all new Council members except for Mr. Warrior, and none of them except for Mr. Warrior were really familiar with this contract, so that needs to be on the record when we are talking about past dealings. Mayor Mark Trimble thanked Commissioner Threadgill and stated that when he looks at this contract from 2015, all he knows is trouble, that's it. Mayor Trimble stated it was not well defined, no definition to how things are except money is going to be exchanged and there's going to be a program and we're going to build a County program. Mayor Trimble stated he would have never signed this to begin with as a person. Mayor Trimble stated there needed to be definition and the reason everyone is coming to the table is to build a County program. Mayor Trimble stated that what Interim Administrator Gay is saying is if we have Manchester, now Woodbury has to come, okay that's great, when is Luthersville coming, when is Greenville coming? Mayor Trimble states if we do not extend to give ourselves time, which Manchester was doing quite a bit, which he will outline, we don't mind doing it again. Mayor Trimble states he can't do one thing today, we are brand new, with three of them being sworn in for the first time on January 1, 2024. Mayor Trimble stated he told the Board when he

was here before and still listened to all the sins of the past, and as far as he is concerned, he is still coming back to the Board because he still believes in a County program. Mayor Trimble presented a document stating this is his definition that he needs to move forward this year and it sets us to have a County-wide program that makes sense for each City that comes on board and it's not undefined. Mayor Trimble states when you are looking at Section 2 that says can we do other things, and to be honest, while there may be legality there, it's thin. Mayor Trimble stated that Commissioner Worsley is seeing that. Commissioner Worsley agreed. Mayor Trimble stated that what you are seeing is we are going to do football, baseball, and basketball, and they are here to do something fantastic and different for this County and that's why we are all here and that's why he keeps coming back. Mayor Trimble states he still believes in a Rec program that has Manchester kids, Woodbury kids, Luthersville kids, Greenville kids, and Lone Oak kids, all who are playing each other. Mayor Trimble stated that is the strongest play that these two groups can do. Mayor Trimble states that is the strongest play, but it has to have definition stronger than this. Mayor Trimble states that it says 8 times in this agreement we are going to build together a strong County program and he will allow himself to say, it didn't happen. Mayor Trimble stated this is what we are trying to further define, and the minute we segment any City out we have a problem, and it is not a County-wide program. Chairman King stated he agreed with what Mayor Trimble was saying and asked if he had brought a contract today that articulates everything your saying should be, how it should be, and that the City would want to sign and would want the County to sign. Mayor Trimble stated he has what he would consider is the definition of this Contract, that a new contract doesn't have to be signed. Chairman King stated that the original version is from 2015, but asked the Mayor if he or his Council has put together a new updated version of the contract that would articulate how all the kids will be involved and how Manchester will welcome everyone down to Manchester, that the Board could review. Mayor Trimble stated that he has his issues that he has brought, and they are extensive to say these are the things that any countywide program or city program in some instances would need. Commissioner Threadgill stated that he wouldn't have even thought to bring a contract today because the whole purpose of this is to sit down and talk about negotiation of this. Mayor Trimble passed out handouts to the Board and Council. Interim Administrator Gay stated that the reason the contract is written that way is because we did not have a strong, defined, outlined, and detailed master plan, and at that time the Board established a Recreation Advisory Board, composed of 9 members, which was too many. Interim Administrator Gay stated it was the most dysfunctional Board he had ever worked with in his life, and they accomplished nothing over three or four years. Interim Administrator Gay stated the plan for the Advisory Board was to work together with the Commissioners to come up with some ideas, strategies, and plans, and instead they were worried about who would make money off the concession stands and wanted something in their own neighborhood, not carrying about what was in other places. Interim Administrator Gay stated that the Board has now restructured the committee with five different appointments, and he feels they will do a much better job. Those that are put on the new Advisory Board will have recreation in mind and not their own self-interests which we have seen a lot of and is one of the reasons that contract is like that, but the purpose of it was to have that Advisory Board assist and work on the Agreement during the time before expiration to have things in place and that was never done. Mayor Trimble stated that anything he is suggesting is not a long-term doing, and as for Manchester, this is what we have been doing and some things that have not, and it has been aggravating. Mayor Trimble stated that the document he provided has listed the properties that they have, and people involved in operations. Mayor Trimble stated

that what Manchester has needs to be defined to continue through this year, so that they make sure they are doing it well, setting up for this larger County program. Mayor Trimble stated the facility preparation that they do is dragging, cutting, lining, and painting bases for baseball. Mayor Trimble stated they perform facility cleaning, including cleaning supplies, lighting and they have done repairs such as lighting in a building that the County was leasing and didn't know, and it cost more than they had, and they had to put in extra money to do that. Mayor Trimble stated that without the definition and the Recreation Advisory Board, things did not get communicated well and his Council is facing the same thing in Manchester itself. Mayor Trimble stated that communication continued to decline, and it was not a back-and-forth situation. Mayor Trimble stated that he doesn't want a new agreement, but wants this agreement defined and this can be added to if need be. Mayor Trimble stated that each referee and coach has to have child protective service training and if it is violated, our personal properties are on the line because you are dealing with the protection of children. Mayor Trimble stated that he needs to see the paperwork and they will pierce the corporate veil for this if there is a child abused by a coach or referee or someone that is supposed to be over them. Mayor Trimble stated if they are traveling and they don't have two adults and are two-deep in leadership, it is these basic things that scare the tar out of him, because his properties are on the line and he doesn't see that paperwork and wants it to walk through this year, which also lines us up to do better as a County. Mayor Trimble stated that Manchester handles the interior concession stand by themselves, but the band handles the outdoor football. Mayor Trimble stated he doesn't know what happened in Woodbury, but if we want to build a strong County program, that has to be defined to the "T", so we are following the same procedure wherever that ends and is a simple thing, but it is how you build a County program. Mayor Trimble stated that the facilities that they use belong to the Board of Education as well as one field being leased. Mayor Trimble stated the facilities in Woodbury belong to the Board of Education. Mayor Trimble asked that when we have repairs that need to be done, how do they not absorb those costs ourselves, but involve the actual owners of the building, as we need to get all the parties involved. Mayor Trimble stated that there needs to be insurance and stated that the County is covering the insurance on those facilities outside Manchester, and Manchester covers their facilities. Mayor Trimble stated that needed to be talked about and how to make it equitable. Mayor Trimble stated record keeping is where he sees a huge loss and has heard all the stories and listened to them and there are pieces of truth in all of them. Mayor Trimble stated he looked for the truth and what he found was there were absolutely no requisition forms, no maintenance request forms, and no repair request forms. Mayor Trimble stated there is no documentation of what is happening with the buildings in anyway, whether it back to the County or Manchester and Manchester is supposed to be reporting that back to the County too. Mayor Trimble stated what is supposed to be happening with the buildings here and they don't have the requisition forms and are supposed to be handling that. Mayor Trimble stated those are things that we can build quickly, and he is willing to build it and put in his personal time in this because he has done this type of stuff before and is all process and oversight of processes. Mayor Trimble stated to hold this contract valid, he personally needs better definition, because otherwise we're going to fail again, and it is just going to be an aggravation. Mayor Trimble stated what he would like it to be is impetus and the start of a County program. Mayor Trimble stated he would like to have computer programs, forms, and databases in place to track, control, and modify where things are needed to be modified, but we don't have the data. Mayor Trimble stated the supervision and onboarding of coaches and referees are the things that he will personally put his time in to give the tools that are needed to do this to finish this contract smart.

Vice Chairman Worsley stated this is all for long-term County recreations. Mayor Trimble stated that no, he would like to do it this year in 2024, and as soon as the contract is signed, if tonight, he will start making these forms as they are not complicated and are put in place now. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that the only thing that could be signed tonight would be the current contract, until the new terms are brought back, which could take months and he is not making that an issue. Mayor Trimble stated what he is saying is he doesn't need the Board to sign tonight unless the Board can agree to the 2024 agreement with the items that he presented. Interim Administrator Gay stated that some of the items that the Mayor brought up, he believed the County is doing, but they may not be communicated well. Interim Administrator Gay stated he does know that a background check is done for the coaches, and everyone involved with the children. Mayor Trimble stated according to the current contract, Manchester is responsible for those records, and they don't have a single one. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he doesn't have a problem with what the City presented, but wanted to know if we can still get it done and salvage this year. Mayor Trimble stated absolutely. Vice Chairman Worsley stated there is a lot of work to do here. Mayor Trimble stated there are a lot of words here, but the work is actually two weeks long. Vice Chairman Worsley stated there was a lot of gray area in the contract and is what has led to a lot of angst and frustration in the County and has led to the perception of doing things in pockets. Vice Chairman Worsley stated the gray areas were meant for good intent, but it needed the Board of Recreation and all those things fell through. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he agreed that we need to do these things but doesn't know that we can get all that done in the next 6 months. Mayor Trimble stated that he believes we can and is putting his personal time in to do it. Mayor Trimble also discussed travel ball and stated that the rules for the use of facilities needed to be standard and are simple decisions to make at this point in time. Mayor Trimble stated it is important to make sure they have their insurance and training as they cannot be allowed on their field or in their facilities, without putting them at risk. Chairman King stated that his daughter played travel ball prior and traveled all around and he misses those days, but to keep in mind, when he goes to watch the ball games and stuff, and we don't have a lot of youth to begin with, but we don't have the parents and grandparents that who can travel to Coweta County to watch their youth play. Chairman King stated they can hardly make it to Woodbury, catch a ride, or pay for gas, and in his opinion, we are not at the stage to where taxpayers money needs to be used for travel ball. Mayor Trimble stated that we do not want any taxpayer money. Chairman King stated that he knew there was quite a bit of travel ball being played in Manchester. Mayor Pro-Tem Quardez Warrior stated that was a separate organization. Mayor Trimble stated that travel ball to him is about one thing, and that is to put a team together that can beat the snot out of anyone they come up against. Chairman King stated and that is for the parents to put the money into. Mayor Trimble stated that is correct and if travel teams are going to use our facilities, we should standardize our approach to them and say this is how it works. More discussion ensued regarding travel teams from all parties. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated that there should be a process for those who play recreation ball to be drafted out and that process should be fleshed out across the County, so it is the same thing and not Woodbury showing up with a travel team, and Manchester has a team that has been drafted out and they get pummeled. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated that is a very important issue that needs to be stressed of what they are and whether they align with it. Vice Chairman Worsley wanted it stated that the difference between travel ball and recreation is travel ball is a child/parent choice and if you want your child to play travel ball and that is a choice they are willing to do, then the parent will have to fund that and the County will not fund that. Vice Chairman Worsley stated we need rules

that define how we interact with travel team programs, and we also need travel team tournaments to help fund and drive revenue for this system. Mayor Trimble stated that the same standardization would apply there, plus, where are we going, we are going to build a County program, so you do that, and Manchester can't have something different than we have here. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated that there were volunteer location sites that had volunteers at Luthersville, Manchester, and Woodbury, who were responsible for retrieving and giving out the equipment at one time and the lack of having someone on site, volunteer or paid has prevented other places from developing a recreation program. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated at some point, every player is going to want to have a home game, and there is a field in Luthersville, and possibly fields in Greenville that can be utilized, but no one is here as a volunteer, like there is in Woodbury, where there is a volunteer person or paid person that can facilitate the equipment disbursement and retrieval. Chairman King stated that he would like to go back to one of the biggest things that was stated as no documentation, no receipts, and know where it went, and to him the common denominator, and he has had a lot of phone calls and emails wanting to know when do we finally start a Meriwether County Recreation Department, because even though it's a failure, and the Board wasn't here nor the Council and he is not pointing fingers, but when do we get to a point when we say here is your Meriwether County Recreation Department. Chairman King stated that when we go to the City of Manchester and say, we are willing to contribute this, what are you willing to contribute, and then go to the smaller cities and say what are you willing to contribute or budget for Recreation, and we get to a County Team. Chairman King stated that all he is hearing is we have been sending \$150,000 dollars to Manchester over the last 9 years which is over \$1 million dollars, what is there for him to tell his constituents for those \$1 million dollars right now. Chairman King stated nobody knows what their money got spent on or where it went and stated it is not the City of Manchester's fault, but he wants to know when we are going to get to the point of having a Meriwether County Recreation Department. Commissioner Threadgill stated that we did have those intentions and a Recreation Director was hired and that did not work out. Vice Chairman Worsley stated his opinion on that is to extend the agreement to some degree through debate tonight through 2024, so that all the children of the County have an opportunity to participate in whatever they want to for the remainder of this year, under a good, well-established program that is in Manchester, and that is the best opportunity for the children in his opinion. Vice Chairman Worsley stated we have more time through the end of the year to outline a better program for 2025, and then improve that for 2026 and so on. Chairman King asked what about the program in Woodbury with 164 kids and 14 teams ready to start playing. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he doesn't know, but we could agree to do nothing. Mayor Trimble stated that you are basically doing the same thing in Woodbury, but in a different city and he is willing to put in his personal time to do this by getting the paperwork and computer program ready to do this. Mayor Trimble stated that is the key to this as well as the documentation and putting that into place. Mayor Trimble asked why you would waste a year and stated Manchester puts in \$382,000, which is outside the \$150,000. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated the \$150,000 is mainly used for administrative, equipment, and so on and so forth in development and keeping up of the County fields, and any registration fees that are outstanding is what it is being used for. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated he is agreement with not having receipts, not having an accountability factor, and not having KPIs because that's were he thinks as a group we have all failed, because we haven't set an earmark and haven't set targets for after year one, and after year two, and after year three. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated if the money is just sitting there and we need a new helmet or new lines on the field, that's what it is

being spent on and it's not really going towards that earmark goal. Interim Administrator Gay stated that the program needs to be standardized in a way that the teams can play each other. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that he is not sure that the other locations will be ready to play, such as the fields in Luthersville, Greenville, and Woodbury. Chairman King stated that the baseball fields in Woodbury would be ready and asked if some of the \$150,000 dollars being sent to Manchester would also go to help take care of the fields in Woodbury. Mayor Trimble stated no we have already been doing that, but it hasn't been documented well, and hasn't been coordinated well, but that is what has already been happening. Commissioner Plant stated there has been no continuation since the previous administration in the City of Manchester and that is what she has a problem with because the County continued the program through Woodbury and the County program, whether we had an agreement or not, but the program has been continued. Commissioner Plant stated it was pretty clear to her that the previous administration wanted to separate and feels we need to be working together so the kids can play together and working on joint fields, but she is not in favor of sending, where Manchester has the lead now. Commissioner Plant stated to her, when you tell her that you don't want any part of what she's doing, she will take you at your word. Commissioner Plant stated other people have stepped up and are carrying on with the program and if we can continue to work toward a countywide program, she is all about Manchester coming in and all being together and feels that's the whole team effort by all working together. Commissioner Plant stated to clarify other municipalities will be brought in from the north end of the County such as Greenville and other municipalities and that will be another day and another discussion, but for now let's keep working with what we've got, building together and working with Manchester, but at a reduced level of commitment. Commissioner Plant stated the funding would be a source, but we also have the ongoing programs that we need to fund. Commissioner Threadgill stated that when the contract was signed many years ago, Manchester was the one that had a Recreation Department that was very well-established and well-known. Commissioner Threadgill stated it is not Manchester's fault that we did not build a countywide recreation program and is the fault of previous board's that did not grow that and is not the City of Manchester's fault, nor is it Manchester's responsibility to grow a countywide recreation program, it is the individuals on these Board's. Commissioner Threadgill stated to Commissioner Plant to let him finish because he hears a lot of attacking Manchester and this is a brand-new board so he doesn't think any of us would appreciate something coming across like an attack when this is supposed to be a sit-down conversation. Commissioner Threadgill stated not one City in this County besides Manchester has stepped up and paid one dime towards recreation, but every City in this County has wanted the County to pay them. Vice Chairman Worsley agreed with Commissioner Threadgill. Commissioner Plant stated she would agree with him totally, but a nine-member board was way too many and we could never get any kind of guidance or participation other than how to run the concession stand and have had a couple of people hired to be recreation directors and that didn't work out. Mayor Trimble stated that he had not attacked her for failing. Mayor Trimble stated he was here because his city failed, and he was attacked heavy, and he has not done the same to anyone on the Board. Commissioner Plant stated she has been told she is very emotional about it but has had to listen to all that is being said to and get some of the emails she has gotten regarding recreation. Commissioner Plant stated she would like a simple board to give guidance, but more importantly wants this to be a countywide program and wants everyone to participate, whether young or old, east, or west. Chairman King read an email from Randy Carter. Mayor Trimble stated that he was under the impression no one would be allowed to speak and by

Chairman King reading that email he had allowed other people to speak. Interim Administrator Gay pointed out that Randy Carter was part of the staff. Commissioner Threadgill stated he wanted to apologize because he did not know that was going to happen. Chairman King stated that was not his intent and that Mr. Carter did work for the County as part of recreation and was not just a citizen with input. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated that when the decision was made to extend the contract there was two vacant seats on the City Council and the three present couldn't come up with a decision and he is not saying that the \$150,000 was not enough and we could of negotiated and stated the administrative could be on the County and the City do other things for a reduced amount of money, but when you start seeing an impact to your fund balance, it does kind of create an issue and with three Council members it was a difficult night to come up with a quorum with two vacant seats and not an issue with the County per say, but to come up with and agree to the same things, that night that was not going to happen. Commissioner Plant stated she appreciated that and can understand that standpoint, but what really hurt her on a personal level, was to read it in the newspaper and see it on social media, and to see on the Facebook page that it was no longer Manchester-Meriwether County. Commissioner Plant stated she would hope we could move past that because she would really like to have a countywide program. Mayor Trimble stated as far as he is concerned and through an informal vote, the City of Manchester has moved past that and are not the same Council and are here to make this work for the County. Commissioner Threadgill stated it would also be beneficial financially for Manchester to do that as well, because if we can get it spread out across the County, it will help the City decrease that amount and that is what he has been saying for many years. Commissioner Threadgill stated this has come up many times over the years about receipts and things and the money that we send to Manchester, but it is very vague in the contract as to what the money is to be spent on. Commissioner Threadgill asked should there have been receipts, absolutely, did we ask for them, absolutely, did we get them, hell no. Commissioner Threadgill stated that is a big issue and he assures the Mayor we did ask for them and did not get them, but the whole purpose in starting this contract and intent was to get this countywide. Commissioner Threadgill stated did we fail, yes we did. Council Member Danny Wadsworth stated his recommendation would be to go into 2024, with the 2023 plan. Council Member Wadsworth stated that we appreciate the \$150,000, but being new on the Council, this is the first time he has seen the contract is tonight, but if we are going to have a strong county program, he feels every municipality in the County needs to step up and pay their fair share. Council Member Wadsworth stated that Manchester is willing to bear the brunt of the facilities, but thinks it is up to all of us and was shocked to hear tonight that Manchester and the County are the only two paying into the program. Council Member Wadsworth stated that they need to step up if they want to participate and hates to say that because he is pro-recreation and children, but Meriwether County can't do it by themselves, and neither can Manchester. Commissioner Threadgill stated that has been the biggest issue is we started off with the intent that the cities would have to participate and if we are looking to do something countywide with taxpayers' money, it will cost about \$2 million dollars a year to do it annually across the entire County. Commissioner Threadgill stated if we work together with the cities, then the County will contribute so much, but the cities have to contribute so much as well to keep up with their facilities too, but it just hasn't happened. Council Member Wadsworth stated that he feels that Meriwether County definitely needs a countywide recreation program. Chairman King stated that needs to be based upon size as obviously, Gay is not going to be able to do what Manchester does. Council Member Wadsworth stated it would be based on budget and he also feels it needs to be made clear the difference in travel ball and County recreation.

Chairman King stated cities could also go out for grants to help with the recreation program. Commissioner Threadgill stated that we are giving about 39-40 percent match to Manchester and thinks we have to look at that based on the size of the cities and do the same across the board based on the size of the city. Chairman King stated he had received calls from other cities wanting to know what the County is going to pay us. Chairman King stated it is not what are we going to pay, it is what is the city willing to contribute. Mayor Trimble stated whether or not an addendum is put in the contract or not, he is still going to do the things suggested, because he wants his recreation department, if they are going to receive money to be accountable, because if not he is not doing his job as Mayor and the Council is not doing its job with him to have the city run correctly. Mayor Trimble stated if the County says okay, we are not going to extend this, is Woodbury putting in the money, that we do this year. Mayor Trimble stated what we are offering is a way to get us to this other picture that we are all painting. Mayor Trimble stated it is a participatory thing, but can we do it now today? Mayor Trimble stated no, he does not see it. Chairman King stated to the Mayor to ask himself this question, if everybody is saying that Meriwether County needs to have their own recreation department that the cities contribute, if we extend it tonight or next meeting, when it is voted on, but we are all thinking next year, we are going to go on our own, will the City be sitting here next year saying we need to stay together and when do we finally make that decision to move on. Mayor Trimble stated that is where the Chairman is assuming that the City doesn't want a program if the County says no. Chairman King stated that is not the assumption, he is saying that looking down the road in 3-4 years from now, whether this Board or another Board decides we are not going to spend that much money and are going to contribute to all the cities, we want them to contribute, and we are going to have a Meriwether County Recreation department, would you not still be here fighting to keep it going. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that is why we are here tonight, because there have been statements made that Manchester said if we do a countywide program, Manchester is going to continue theirs separate from the County. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if that is a true intention of the Council. Mayor Trimble stated that you can go back in our Minutes and see where that statement was made and that is not in this group and is not their will and not why they came up here tonight and their will is to help build a countywide program. Vice Chairman Worsley asked if Talbot County was in an agreement with Manchester Recreation and is Talbot County participating in Manchester Recreation. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated there is no formal agreement, but they have participated in some sports and pay an out of City fee to come in and play and pay either per player or per team. Commissioner Threadgill stated that some of Manchester City limits are in Talbot County. Mayor Trimble stated that the City is not charging a surcharge to anyone else in the County. Vice Chairman Worsley stated that was a very large gesture on Manchester's part to waive that fee. Mayor Trimble stated this shows their will and is a physical demonstration of a change and asked the Board if they needed to trust words, no, what he is trying to do is actions. Mayor Trimble stated that if the County doesn't agree to the extension, they are not going to abandon their program as they have 150 kids signed up to play baseball and want them playing the County. Mayor Pro Tem Warrior stated that he feels that is the goal and there are stages to getting us to where the County has one centralized facility or whatever the case, but to say today we are walking in and had the money to build one tomorrow, that we just walk away from all the infrastructure and go to the centrally located one would be ridiculous to say. Mr. Warrior stated he does feel as we stage this out to get the County Recreation program off the ground there are benefits to having facilities in different locations as it does offer the opportunity to do travel ball or large-scale tournaments, things would still be in

place to take care of those fields. Vice Chairman Worsley stated it would be ridiculous to enter into a County agreement and abandon the facilities that are already in place, just because of the City it is in. Vice Chairman Worsley stated a lot of the County is going to have to get past the fact that there is triangle that most of the activity and most of the funding is going to go to and it goes from Greenville to Woodbury to Manchester, because that's where the citizens and children are and where most of the stuff is going to be, 75% pick a number but all the activities, games, practice fields, and money spent is going to go to that triangle and other areas are going to have to get used to that until it grows enough to have equal home and practice for kids in those areas, there is no way around it. Mayor Trimble stated that Manchester is willing to invest in the County and work with the other cities to build what we are all looking for and need that. Vice Chairman Worsley stated he doesn't know if the reason we are sitting here arguing is about who we want to get the money as there is a \$150,000 dollar balloon floating and most people are concerned with is Manchester getting that, was Woodbury getting that, was Greenville getting that, was nobody getting that and he feels that is really what is at the root of what is going on, and Manchester is there needing the money to do county stuff. Vice Chairman Worsley stated we need to decide what we are going to do for the rest of this year and he is concerned that if the County says we are not doing the agreement, we are basically trading one location for another, without any kind of agreement, even less checks and balances and transparency to what we say is a weak contract in the beginning and if we say we don't want to go with Manchester, we can't be sitting here giving it all to Woodbury or Greenville or Luthersville without some kind of checks and balances in there and we have already started doing that and that is why he wants to be cautious and in a minimum at the end of 2024, there's no recreation money until we come up with a plan. Chairman King stated that goes to whatever Recreation we already have established. Vice Chairman Worsley stated with no checks and balances. Chairman King stated that anything that has to be done, such as a ballfield goes through the Recreation already established. Commissioner Threadgill stated that the way the \$150,000 is disbursed is in monthly installments so wherever we're at if we decide to go back with this will start back with that amount and won't be the full \$150,000 because that did stop and will be an easier way to do that. Interim Administrator Gay stated that if it was done that way it would help Manchester with their program and free up some money to help with the existing program for the County. Interim Administrator Gay stated he doesn't know if we will be able to get this done in time with baseball starting in less than a month, but any decision that is made, again he comes back to what happens after that. Interim Administrator Gay stated there are other models in other counties that work very well and could be tried out in Meriwether. Interim Administrator Gay explained one of those models regarding the cities providing the facilities and the county maintaining them. Commissioner Threadgill suggested before sitting down with each individual city, asking them to send in what is important for them in their area and what type of recreation they would like to see before sitting down with a Board. Interim Administrator Gay agreed but needed the cities to be realistic about what they could do in their area. Commissioner Threadgill stated he made some pretty aggressive statements tonight toward and defending Manchester, but it wasn't defending, it is they have done what he feels they should have done prior to this Board and this Board is a different situation, but also don't want to take anything away from anybody else that has stepped up after that contract was not renewed with Manchester. Commissioner Threadgill stated for those individuals who did step up and continued for the kids he wanted to say thank you for that too, because that does mean the world to everybody and thinks that it is bigger than any of our feelings and anything personal we could all look at, because it is about the children in

this County and not about me, you, or anyone else and is about those kids and that's where we need to move forward and figure this out. There was no further discussion but was a need for Executive Session by the Board to discuss Personnel and Litigation.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryan Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Adam Worsley to go into Executive Session to discuss Personnel and Litigation at 5:29 p.m. All were in favor. Commissioner Plant stepped out of the room. A motion was made by Commissioner Threadgill and seconded by Vice Chairman Worsley to go out of Executive Session at 5:43 p.m. All were in favor. There was no action taken in Executive Session.

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, the Work Session concluded 5:54 p.m.

Approved by: Majority Vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Allyson G. Stephens

Date: March 13, 2024