

**Garland County  
Senior Citizens Center Committee  
August 26, 2024  
Minutes**

**Senior Citizens Center Committee Members Present:** Chairman Dayton Myers, Justices Jimmy Young and Esther Dixon

**Members Absent:** Justice Debbie McGrew

**Also Present:** Citizens, Elected Officials, Staff, and Media

Chairman Myers opened the meeting by thanking members of the community for attending and notes the strong interest in the potential construction of a new Senior Center, which has been widely discussed. Myers expressed optimism that the upcoming announcement will be well-received and commended Judge Darryl Mahoney and his staff for their dedication to the project. Myers then invites Judge Mahoney to share the news.

Mahoney stated that he appointed the committee last week, and they have been discussing the Senior Citizen Center. Over the weekend, Mahoney coordinated with the administration at Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) Saint Vincent and explored several properties. They have determined that constructing a new center is the best option, planning to model it after the well-regarded Pope County Center, which is 13,500 square feet and has an estimated cost of \$3.9 million. The city and county have each committed \$500,000. With the committee's approval, Mahoney plans to move forward with conceptual drawings and seek additional funding from other agencies, all without raising taxes. Mahoney stated that the county has a fund that was established decades ago from the sale of the Ouachita Memorial Hospital (OMH), which will be used for the project. Mahoney stated that he plans to draw 2 to \$2.5 million from this fund, which currently has about \$7 million, and replenish it over the next four to five years. Mahoney stated that his goal is to gather community contributions and use this fund judiciously, considering its role in anticipated revenue and investment income. Mahoney noted that he is exploring the possibility of a long-term lease or donation of property near CHI Hospital for the new facility, noting its accessibility and existing infrastructure. He said that an architectural firm will design the project, incorporating elements from the Pope County Center but customizing them for the center's needs, and a construction manager will assist in reducing costs, potentially saving up to \$500,000. Mahoney noted that the project is expected to take twelve to eighteen months, and he also reached out to CHI about leasing or using the McAuley Center. After consulting with the County Comptroller, Susan Ashmore, and conducting extensive number crunching, Mahoney is confident in the project's feasibility.

Myers also notes that the project will be a community-wide collaborative effort involving both county and city governments focusing on supporting seniors. Justice Young then introduced a group of dedicated women who have worked hard to provide information and suggest locations for the project, particularly highlighting Donna Beck for her significant contributions. Young expressed his gratitude for their involvement and efforts in the senior citizen center initiative. A motion was then made by Justice Dixon and seconded by Justice Young to move forward.

Justice Young then asked about whether the city has discussed the possibility of reimbursing the county if additional funds are needed from the OMH Fund. Mahoney said that it had not been discussed yet and the idea had only recently come up after discussions with CHI. He noted that the plan is to present a conceptual drawing to the city and other agencies to seek additional contributions. Mahoney said that the building will be county-owned, with future considerations including a right of first refusal for the hospital if the county decides to sell it later. He said that the goal is to gather support from various sources, including state agencies, but the county is prepared to move forward with the available funds if necessary. The committee expressed confidence that this funding goal is achievable given the value of the project for seniors. Myers then asked for any further discussion, with none, the motion passed. Additionally, Marion Shively, a senior citizen with many valuable ideas, was acknowledged for her advocacy, despite being unable to attend the meeting. With no further discussion, Justice Young made a motion to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lanie Martin

Garland County Finance Director