

Dodge County Board of Commissioners
Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.



Commissioners Present:

Chairman Dan McCranie
Sharon Cobb Flanagan, District 1
Vice-Chair Brian Watkins, District 3
Karen Cheek, District 4

Also Present:

Conner Bearden, County Manager
Kimberly Smith-Parkerson, County Clerk
John Harrington, County Attorney

The Dodge County Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting at the Dodge County Pearl Bates Courthouse Annex Monday, October 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. with Chairman McCranie presiding. He called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. After that, Commissioner Cheek gave a devotion from Isaiah 40, entitled "Fully Charged" and led a prayer.

Elected Officials/Department Heads

None present.

Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes October 07, 2024 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes with no additions, corrections or deletions. Commissioner Flanagan seconded. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Old Business

A. Fire Mitigation Rates Resolution

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve the fire mitigation resolution with revisions as advised by Attorney Harrington to reference the Dodge County Board of Commissioners and not the Board of Directors of the Dodge County Fire. Commissioner Cheek seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the resolution passed, as revised below:

RESOLUTION NO: _____

A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING A PROGRAM TO CHARGE MITIGATION RATES FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF EMERGENCY AND NON-EMERGENCY SERVICES BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED/RENDERED BY/FOR THE DODGE COUNTY FIRE.

WHEREAS, the emergency services response activity to incidents continues to increase each year; Environmental Protection requirements involving equipment and training, and Homeland Security regulations involving equipment and training, creating additional demands on all operational aspects of the fire department services; and

WHEREAS, the fire department has investigated different methods to maintain a high level of quality of emergency and non-emergency service capability throughout times of constantly increasing service demands, where maintaining an effective response by the fire department decreases the costs of incidents to insurance carriers, businesses, and individuals through timely and effective management of emergency situations, saving lives and reducing property and environmental damage; and

WHEREAS, raising real property tax to meet the increase in service demands would not be fair when the responsible party(s) should be held accountable for their actions; and

WHEREAS, the Dodge County Board of Commissioners desires to implement a fair and equitable procedure by which to collect said mitigation rates and shall establish a billing system in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and guidelines; Now, Therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE DODGE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

SECTION 1: The Dodge County Fire shall initiate mitigation rates for the delivery of emergency and non-emergency services by the fire department for personnel, supplies and equipment to the scene of emergency and non-emergency incidents as listed in "EXHIBIT A". The mitigation rates shall be based on actual costs of the services and that which is usual, customary and reasonable (UCR) as shown in "EXHIBIT A", which may include any services, personnel, supplies, and equipment and with baselines established by addendum to this document.

SECTION 2: A claim shall be filed to the responsible party(s) through their insurance carrier. In some circumstances, the responsible party(s) will be billed directly.

SECTION 3: The Dodge County Board of Commissioners may make rules or regulations and from time to time may amend, revoke, or add rules and regulations, not consistent with this Section, as they may deem necessary or expedient in respect to billing for these mitigation rates or the collection thereof.

SECTION 4: It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Board concerning and relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in open meetings of this Board, and that all deliberations of this Board and any of its committees that resulted in such formal actions were in accordance with all legal requirements, and the Codified Resolutions of the Board.

SECTION 5: This resolution shall take effect at the date of adoption.

SECTION 6: The Mitigation Rates lists in Exhibit A will increase annually based on the annual percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Rate adjustments will occur on the anniversary date of this ordinance/resolution to keep the fire department's cost recovery program in conformity with increasing operating expenses.

THE ABOVE WAS PASSED

Yea _____

Nay _____

Certified by the Clerk: _____

Signature: _____

Name (printed): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

**EXHIBIT A
MITIGATION RATES
BASED ON PER HOUR**

The mitigation rates below are average “billing levels”, and are typical for the incident responses listed, however, when a claim is submitted, it may be itemized and based on the actual services provided.

These rates are based on actual costs using amortized schedules for apparatus (including useful life, equipment, repairs, and maintenance). Labor rates include an average department’s actual burdened labor costs and not just a firefighter’s wage. These include wages, retirement, benefits, workers comp, etc.

MOTOR VEHICLE INCIDENTS

Level 1 - \$602.00

Provide hazardous materials assessment and scene stabilization. This will be the most common “billing level”. This occurs almost every time the fire department responds to an accident/incident.

Level 2 - \$687.00

Includes Level 1 services as well as clean up and material used (sorbents) for hazardous fluid clean up and disposal. We will bill at this level if the fire department has to clean up any gasoline or other automotive fluids that are spilled as a result of the accident/incident.

Level 3 – CAR FIRE - \$838.00

Provide scene safety, fire suppression, breathing air, rescue tools, hand tools, hose, tip use, foam, structure protection, and clean up gasoline or other automotive fluids that are spilled as a result of the accident/incident.

ADD-ON SERVICES:

Extrication - \$1,811.00

Includes heavy rescue tools, ropes, airbags, cribbing etc. This charge will be added if the fire department has to free/remove anyone from the vehicle(s) using any equipment. We will not bill at this level if the patient is simply unconscious and fire department is able to open the door to access the patient. This level is to be billed only if equipment is deployed.

Creating a Landing Zone - \$553.00

Includes Air Care (multi-engine company response, mutual aid, helicopter). We will bill at this level any time a helicopter landing zone is created and/or is utilized to transport the patient(s).

Itemized Response: You have the option to bill each incident as an independent event with custom mitigation rates, for each incident using, itemized rates deemed usual, customary and reasonable (UCR). These incidents will be billed, itemized per apparatus, per personnel, plus products and equipment used.

HAZMAT

Level 1 - \$972.00

Basic Response: Claim will include engine response, first responder assignment, perimeter establishment, evacuations, set-up and command.

Level 2 - \$3,473.00

Intermediate Response: Claim will include engine response, first responder assignment, hazmat certified team and appropriate equipment, perimeter establishment, evacuations, set-up and command, Level A or B suit donning, breathing air and detection equipment. Set-up and removal of decon center.

Level 3 – \$8,199.00

Advanced Response: Claim will include engine response, first responder assignment, hazmat certified team and appropriate equipment, perimeter establishment, evacuations, first responder set-up and command, Level A or B suit donning, breathing air and detection equipment and robot deployment. Set-up and removal of decon center, detection equipment, recovery and identification of material. Disposal and environment clean up. Includes above in addition to any disposal rates of material and contaminated equipment and material used at scene. Includes 3 hours of on scene time - **each additional hour @ \$381.00 per HAZMAT team.**

FIRES

Assignment - \$554.00 per hour, per engine / \$693.00 per hour, per truck

Includes:

- Scene Safety
- Investigation
- Fire / Hazard Control

This will be the most common “billing level”. This occurs almost every time the fire department responds to an incident.

OPTIONAL: A fire department has the option to bill each fire as an independent event with custom mitigation rates.

Itemized, per person, at various pay levels and for itemized products use.

ILLEGAL FIRES

Assignment - \$554.00 per hour, per engine / \$693.00 per hour, per truck

When a fire is started by any person or persons that requires a fire department response during a time or season when fires are regulated or controlled by local or state rules, provisions or ordinances because of pollution or fire danger concerns, such person or persons will be liable for the fire department response at a cost not to exceed the actual expenses incurred by the fire department to respond and contain the fire. Similarly, if a fire is started where permits are required for such a fire and the permit was not obtained and the fire department is required to respond to contain the fire the responsible party will be liable for the response at a cost not to exceed the actual expenses incurred by the fire department. The actual expenses will include direct labor, equipment costs and any other costs that can be reasonably allocated to the cost of the response.

WATER INCIDENTS

Level 1

Basic Response: Claim will include engine response, first responder assignment, perimeter establishment, evacuations, first responder set-up and command, scene safety and investigation (including possible patient contact, hazard control). This will be the most common “billing level”. This occurs almost every time the fire department responds to a water incident.

Billed at \$554 plus \$68 per hour, per rescue person.

Level 2

Intermediate Response: Includes Level 1 services as well as clean up and material used (sorbents), minor hazardous clean up and disposal. We will bill at this level if the fire department has to clean up small amounts of gasoline or other fluids that are spilled as a result of the incident.

Billed at \$1,110 plus \$68 per hour, per rescue person.

Level 3

Advanced Response: Includes Level 1 and Level 2 services as well as D.A.R.T. activation, donning breathing apparatus and detection equipment. Set up and removal of decon center, detection equipment, recovery and identification of material. Disposal and environment clean up. Includes above in addition to any disposal rates of material and contaminated equipment and material used at scene.

Billed at \$2,747 plus \$68 per hour per rescue person, plus \$134 per hour per HAZMAT team member.

Level 4

Itemized Response: You have the option to bill each incident as an independent event with custom mitigation rates for each incident using itemized rates deemed usual, customary and reasonable (UCR). These incidents will be billed, itemized, per trained rescue person, plus rescue products used.

BACK COUNTRY OR SPECIAL RESCUE

Itemized Response: Each incident will be billed with custom mitigation rates deemed usual, customary and reasonable (UCR). These incidents will be billed, itemized per apparatus per hour, per trained rescue person per hour, plus rescue products used.

Minimum billed \$554 plus \$68 per hour, per rescue person. Additional rates of \$554 per hour per response vehicle and \$68 per hour per rescue person.

CHIEF RESPONSE

This includes the set-up of Command, and providing direction of the incident. This could include operations, safety, and administration of the incident.

Billed at \$347 per hour.

MISCELLANEOUS / ADDITIONAL TIME ON-SCENE

ADDITIONAL TIME ON-SCENE (for all levels of service)

Engine billed at \$554 per hour.

Truck billed at \$693 per hour.

Miscellaneous equipment billed at \$416.

MITIGATION RATE NOTES

The mitigation rates above are average "billing levels" for one hour of service, and are typical for the incident responses listed, however, when a claim is submitted, it may be itemized and based on the actual services provided.

These average mitigation rates were determined by itemizing costs for a typical run (from the time a fire apparatus leaves the station until it returns to the station) and are based on the actual costs, using amortized schedules for apparatus (including useful life, equipment, repairs, and maintenance) and labor rates (an average department's "actual personnel expense" and not just a firefighter's basic wage). The actual personnel expense includes costs such as wages, retirement, benefits, workers comp, insurance, etc.

B. Board of Elections – Terms

Commissioner Watkins made a motion for Larry J. Mullis, David Sheffield, and Archie Spivey to have four-year terms and Willie C. King and Selma Grimes to have two-year terms. Commissioner Flanagan seconded. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

New Business

A. Approval of Accounts Payable

A motion was made by Commissioner Flanagan and seconded by Commissioner Cheek to approve the accounts payable report totaling \$83,681.36. All voted in agreement, and the motion passed.

B. Solar Ordinance

Commissioner Flanagan made a motion to table the solar ordinance until such time the board has had a thorough review of the ordinance. Commissioners Watkins seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and motion passed.

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to suspend all applications for solar until such time that all qualifications for the ordinance have been decided upon. Commissioner Cheek seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

C. Noise Ordinance

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to table the proposed noise ordinance until Sheriff Robinson could offer input and recommendations. Commissioners Cheek and Flanagan seconded the motion to table. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

D. Public Defender Contract

Commissioner Cheek made a motion to table the renewal of the public defender's contract until the issue regarding the guardian ad litem for juveniles has been decided. Commissioner Flanagan seconded the motion to table. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

E. Joint Development Authority of Bleckley and Dodge

Manager Bearden reported receiving an email requesting the county's audits be submitted to Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) in support of the Joint Development Authority of Bleckley County and Dodge County's water project. The project description indicates the Authority proposes to construct an elevated tank and install a drinking water well. There's no commitment required at this time, per the Manager; however, the Authority has been dormant so GEFA requires audits from the host or sponsoring county.

The board's consensus was not to proceed with anything until more information was available from the Authority.

F. Dodge County Comprehensive Plan

The Chairman requested the board review the Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program in order to discuss at the next meeting.

G. Joint Work Session with Cities – HB 581

No work session was decided upon at this meeting. The board’s consensus was to wait to see if the bill passes or not.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Flanagan reported from ACCG’s meeting. She reported top three priorities as follows: Next Gen 911, HB 581 clean up, and truck weight limits/LMIG.

Commissioner Flanagan reported attending the airport authority meeting.

Chairman McCranie asked about the completion of the county’s financial audit, which the County Manager stated he hoped would be wrapped up in a couple of weeks.

County Manager Report: Conner Bearden

Manager Bearden discussed HB 581 and if it passes, it will be in effect Jan. 1, 2025. He updated regarding community events. Friday, Nov. 1 was set as a date for the budget work session.

Public Comments

Wallace Mullis thanked the board for touring the solar site in Gresston.

Susan Coffee stated the county needed to implement county-wide planning and zoning.

Adjourn

With no other business to come before the board, Commissioner Watkins made a motion to adjourn at 7:11 p.m. Commissioner Flanagan seconded, and all voted in favor. The meeting adjourned.

Attested:

Approved:

Kimberly Smith-Parkerson, County Clerk

Dan McCranie, Chairman