

Meeting Date: 7/29/2025  
Meeting of: Madison County Fiscal Court  
Meeting Type: Special Called

## **HONORABLE REAGAN TAYLOR COUNTY JUDGE EXECUTIVE PRESIDING**

The Madison County Fiscal Court convened in a special called meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2025 at 9:30 AM in the Fiscal Courtroom of the Courthouse Annex Building in Richmond, Ky. Present was the Honorable Reagan Taylor in the chair presiding and the following members of the Fiscal Court: James Brian Combs, Stephen Lochmueller, Billy Ray Hughes, and Tom Botkin were present. Madison County Assistant Attorney Brooke Bowman, Madison County Sheriff Michael Coyle, and Madison County Clerk Kenny Barger were also present.

It being determined a quorum was present, the meeting was called to order.

Judge Taylor asked Magistrate Botkin to lead the Court in prayer.

Judge Taylor asked Sheriff Mike Coyle to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **IN RE: Discussion and Future Direction from the Fiscal Court for Madison County Emergency Communications Center (MCECC – 911) Funding:**

Judge Taylor talked about what had transpired in regard to the Madison County Emergency Communications Center (MCECC – 911) over the past couple of weeks, and there had been some speculation that there was information that wasn't relayed out. He explained that his team has put together a PowerPoint presentation on the timeline and facts concerning the discussion of the 911 fee.

Jill Williams, Deputy Judge Executive, explained that the goal, from a 911 perspective, is always to get the right responder to the right place as quickly as they can, and decisions that are made concerning 911 can ultimately be life or death decisions. She provided a presentation to summarize how they got to where they are now.

Enhanced 911 was established in Madison County in 1990 and a landline fee was implemented. In 2008, Berea and Madison County Fiscal Court merged, with the City of Richmond joining in 2010, to become a joint 911. At that time, the landline fee was reassessed and went from \$9.96 annually to \$42 annually. In September 2023, with record low landline use and CSEPP funding declining, all three governments came together and passed a Resolution jointly establishing a Post-CSEPP Task Force (with two (2) appointed members from each jurisdiction plus a subject matter expert). The Task Force, who was comprised of Rose Beverly (Berea City Administrator), Shawn Sandlin (Berea City Fire Chief), Tim Gray (Madison County Fire Chief and EMA/CSEPP Director), Chris Iseral (Madison County Chief Information Officer), Rob Minerich (Richmond City Manager), Rodney Richardson (Richmond City Police Chief), and Wendy Lynch (911 Director); started meeting weekly beginning on November 7, 2023. Jill provided a timeline of meetings, work sessions, and interlocal agreements that had transpired with all three governments from September 2023 to the present.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that this is very important because it involves the safety of the citizens; it is not a political issue but a very serious issue which they have taken seriously.

Magistrate Combs stated that they are there to fix the problems and concerns the citizens and governments have, and to make sure that the right responder is dispatched to the right place.

Jill stated that when they had a Joint Local Government meeting with the Task Force, which was live streamed by all three local governments on March 21, 2024, it was reaffirmed that what they

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presented was not “set in stone” and their recommendations were subject to changes. There were also several recommendations on formatting the fee that was suggested by members of the local government, as well as details that needed to be worked out. After that joint meeting, both cities passed resolutions to support the county’s 911 funding model, but they didn’t specify the funding method that would be used, just that it would be on each parcel and would be on the county tax bill since a county tax bill goes out to every parcel. After several conversations, shared concerns, and meetings, it was determined that the 911 fee should be based on usage data instead of just a flat across the board fee for every entity.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that as a government entity, it was up to the leadership of each government to make sure that fee structure was understood by everyone within that government and to ask questions if not.

Jill stated that it was the County’s intent and job to make sure they are effective communicators. As a Fiscal Court, they didn’t want to implement a fee when they were still getting federal funding from FEMA for 911. As a result, both mayors and their respective legislative bodies were invited to a “Future of 911” presentation, which was attended by the Berea City Council and the Berea Mayor.

Magistrate Lochmueller asked if anyone from the City of Richmond attended. Jill stated that they didn’t have any documentation stating that they had attended.

Magistrate Lochmueller also asked, from the data that was provided on the 911 call usage, if they could determine the percentage of the call volume that came from Richmond, Berea, and the County. Jill stated that it is about 20% from the City of Berea, 24% from the unincorporated limits of the County, and 56% from the City of Richmond.

Jill continued with the comparison presentation of the original model and the square-foot model that was presented during a Fiscal Court meeting in May 2024.

Magistrate Combs stated from the conversations he has had with citizens during the appeal process, when they realized that most would be paying less with the square-footage model than they did with the landline fees, they liked the proposal.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that during this process, they were able to clean the systems up to make sure they have the correct information on the square footage and zoning of properties for the future, which has been a good thing for all three (3) entities.

Jill continues with the timeline of the passing of the Ordinance for the funding mechanism of 911 by the County and then passing the Interlocal Agreements by the City of Berea, City of Richmond, and the Fiscal Court.

Magistrate Lochmueller asked what the vote was for the passing of the interlocal agreement by the City of Richmond. Jill stated that it was unanimously voted to approve.

Jill explained that in the months following the approval of the interlocal agreement, Richmond City Commissioners inquired about the 911 fee and requested information be posted on their website during a Board of Commissioners meeting. Richmond City Manager acknowledged the request, noting that the information had been provided to the Commissioners and could be resent. Jill stated that the purpose of this presentation was to summarize the events that have happened over the course of the 911 Task Force and all the work that has gone into the development of the 911 fee model to determine what was best for the citizens.

Magistrate Hughes asked about where they were right now. Judge Taylor stated that they now need some direction on where to go from the Fiscal Court. He stated that he will honor the City of Richmond’s decision, but that it does change the dynamic for the County and the City of Berea. Jill explained that last week, the City of Richmond approved an Order that they would fund their portion of 911 based on calls of service (56%). That Order changes the framework and

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model because a large contingent of multi-family and business is more heavily located within the city limits.

Magistrate Hughes asked if they could keep the same model that they have with the City of Richmond paying their portion. Jill stated that it is up to the decision of the Fiscal Court. Judge Taylor stated that when they break down the financial impact of the percentages based on calls of service in each jurisdiction, the County's portion of that based on last calendar year's 911 data is about \$1,018,640. He reminded the Court that will also be losing about \$1,250,000 to \$1,500,000 in occupational tax because of the jobs that will be going away at the Blue Grass Army Depot. Judge Taylor went on to explain that the City of Richmond's portion of the 911 fee amount is \$2,388,240 and the City of Berea's portion is \$873,120.

Jill stated that they have to look at not just right now, but also into the future and make decisions that will set the County up for success long-term.

Magistrate Lochmueller recognized that Mayor Fraley is in attendance today and stated that he would like to continue to work with Berea in any way that they can because they are and have been a good partner.

Jill explained that one thing they will have to do is modify the budget participation section of that interlocal agreement because it refers to the fact that all three governments agreed to the interlocal agreement and about the funding model. Now that the City of Richmond has decided that they want to go in a different direction, they will have to amend that based on discussions with the City of Berea, and legal advice they have received, stating that each jurisdiction would be responsible for their portion of the 911 fee and wouldn't outline the methodology so that each jurisdiction would be able to choose the methodology that would be best for their citizens.

Magistrate Lochmueller clarified that no matter what methodology the City of Richmond chooses to use, they are still obligated for their total dollar amount to support 911.

Judge Taylor stated that one of the intentions of the Task Force was to not set up future elected leaders to fail because they didn't future proof the model. The change in the interlocal agreement in which each jurisdiction is responsible for their portion, future proofs it by not only paying for 911 service but also for life cycle replacement of the infrastructure and technologies.

Magistrate Combs stated that this change to allow each jurisdiction to choose the best model for them allows them some flexibility in this agreement to make some changes that taxpayers have had concerns over.

Judge Taylor stated that during the Joint Government Meeting they had, there was a presentation on the different funding options based on law that are available to local governments, which included landline telephone fee, water meter fee, electric meter fee, and land use fee. He stated that a lot of citizens have asked why they didn't put the fee on cell phones, and he explained that they don't have the legislative authority to do so, only the State does.

Chris Iseral stated that Judge Taylor was correct. Each of those options have already been vetted by the Supreme Court. The option to add it to the water or electric meter had more complexity of the fee, and whether it is flat or based on consumption and would have to go through each different water and electric companies to get through.

Magistrate Botkin stated that they are at the point where decisions have been made outside this governing body and their responsibility is to the citizens that live within the unincorporated limits of the county. He believes that for 2025, they separate and be responsible for just the county and whatever mechanism that turns out to be.

Judge Taylor recommended the Court take a 5-minute recess at 10:56 AM.

Fiscal Court reconvened at 11:02 AM with public comments.

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Darnell Crenshaw, WKYT, asked if Judge Taylor had any concerns about the discrepancies or miscommunication between the Fiscal Court and what Mayor Blythe had said about the interlocal agreement. Judge Taylor stated that based on what was shown today, there shouldn't have been any discrepancies. He can't control what someone else thinks, all he can control is the data they as a Fiscal Court put out.

Darnell Crenshaw also asked Judge Taylor to clarify how much money they would need from the citizens of Berea, Madison County, and Richmond to operate E911, and when do they need the money by. Judge Taylor stated that CSEPP funding, which is minimum compared to what it had been, ends at the end of September. The shortfall of the 911 fee structure is roughly \$4,280,000. Jill stated that \$4,280,000 is comprised of \$2,388,240 for the City of Richmond, the \$873,120 for the City of Berea, and the \$1,018,640 for the County.

Francis Click, Waco, asked if there is a timeframe on when the appeals that citizens sent in will be completed now. Judge Taylor stated that it depends on the direction the Fiscal Court decides to go. If the Ordinance is repealed, then the letters that were sent out are null and void, as that will no longer be the methodology for the 911 fee collection with both cities. The citizens will be getting a communication back soon though. Ms. Click expressed her appreciation on the communication and transparency the Court has provided.

Marshall Stiltner, 2460 Lancaster Road, stated that one of his issues is that no one has heard anything about the 911 fee and asked why they waited until now to implement a fee when they knew CSEPP was leaving. Judge Taylor stated that he believes they shouldn't charge the taxpayer until it is time to charge the taxpayer. Also, they have had several Court meetings that were live and streamed on social media, public forums, and even Townhall meetings discussing the 911 fee.

Jill stated that they received a letter from the federal government in March 2025 that the CSEPP funding would officially cease on September 30, 2025. They have known since CSEPP came that it would end at some point, but that timeline had changed several times over the course of the years.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that Madison County has been the beneficiary of these federal funds, and they didn't want to tax the citizens until it went away, which most citizens would appreciate.

Magistrate Combs stated that the Task Force had reassessed the need of 911, so that they have what they need, not just what they had previously. Chris stated that it was the Department Heads that were challenged by the Fiscal Court to buy what was prudent because they knew the funding was ending. All the concerns about what it would cost post-CSEPP have been taken into account this whole time.

Marshall Stiltner also talked about reevaluating the properties through the PVA office and the errors on the letters. Judge Taylor stated that they knew that the square footage on the properties would not be accurate for everyone because the PVA can't go in and measure the exact square footage of homes and they don't use the square footage data in that way in the PVA system. The purpose of the letters that were sent out was to determine whether the information was correct or not and to get it corrected before the fee was put onto the property tax bills. Judge Taylor thanked Billy Ackerman and his team for their assistance and hard work.

Magistrate Botkin stated that the PVA assesses properties in quarters for four (4) years, so every four (4) years each property will be reassessed.

Mary McMahan, Richmond, asked for clarification on the federal funding and taxing for the 911 fee. Jill stated that the recommendation in March 2024 was to continue with the funding in 2024 tax bill. They knew that the federal funding would last through at least June 2025. As those

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federal funds were extended, the Court made the choice to not yet charge the citizens since they were still getting the federal funding.

Mary McMahan also asked if the CSEPP funds will cover anymore past what would be collected on the tax bill. Jill stated that CSEPP funds are designated for certain components of 911, they can't make the decision to use it for anything they aren't designated for. As it gets closer to the end of the funding, it has become more descriptive on how those funds are used, and any funds that are remaining after CSEPP funding can't be used for any other purpose. Judge Taylor also stated that CSEPP funding will end at the end of September 2025.

Mary McMahan also asked how the public would be able to get a copy of the charts and documentation that has been shown. Jill stated that on the County website under the Transparency tab always has the Resolutions, Ordinances, and Fiscal Court meetings. They will post the link of the presentation that will have the embedded links in it after today's meeting.

### **IN RE: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Ordinance 2025-009 — Repealing Ordinance 2024-007-Joint Local Government 911 Fee Amendment:**

Jill Williams, Deputy Judge Executive, presented 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Ordinance 2025-009 — Repealing Ordinance 2024-007 Joint Local Government 911 Fee Amendment for the Court's approval. This is an Ordinance of the Madison County Fiscal Court, repealing Ordinance #2024-007, an Ordinance relating to the funding of enhanced 911 Emergency Communications Center operations for the City of Berea, the City of Richmond, and throughout Madison County, Kentucky and repealing Ordinance 07-11.

Magistrate Hughes asked if the Board that they set up with the interlocal agreement would still remain. Judge Taylor stated that it would remain because that Board is associated with the Emergency Services, not the funding mechanism. Jill explained that the agreement outlined the Advisory Board and the makeup of that Board, as well as the funding mechanism. The amendment that would need to occur would change the funding mechanism for all three jurisdictions and how the budget structure is to be.

Judge Taylor asked what direction the Court would like to go from here.

Magistrate Hughes stated that originally, they had four (4) funding mechanisms available; the landline fee will no longer be available, and it looks like the land use model is not desired, so that just leaves putting it on the electric meters or water meters. Judge Taylor stated that they could rework the land use structure if they wished but isn't sure what that would look like.

Jill stated that through conversations with counties across the state, the water meter model and land use model are the most commonly used models.

Magistrate Hughes asked if they could put together a presentation on those two (2) models for the next meeting so the Court will have some data to analyze. Jill stated that if the Court wants to go in that direction, they can pull that data together and present it.

Magistrate Botkin stated that the feedback he got the most when talking with the public was on the water meter. However, there is a collection fee that would be associated with putting the fee on the meter bills, whether that be a water or electric meter bill.

Magistrate Combs stated that with the change in the dynamic, looking at the water meter model may address some questions they have had concerning non-profits and churches.

Judge Taylor believes that it would also be easier for the public to understand in comparison to the land-use model.

Martin Lovell, Waco, asked if the fee would be tax deductible for those with a tax exemption status. Assistant Attorney Brooke Bowman stated that it is a fee rather than a tax but suggested he speak to his CPA. Jill stated that she didn't believe a fee would apply as a tax deduction.

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Judge Taylor stated that they have a direction in which the Court wishes to see and will have a presentation on the requested information at the next meeting.

**ANNOUNCE NEXT COURT DATE:**

Judge Taylor announced the next court date for August 12, 2025, in the Fiscal Courtroom at the Madison County Courthouse Annex in Richmond, Ky at 9:30 AM.

**IN RE: ADJOURNMENT**

Motion from Billy Ray Hughes to adjourn, seconded by Stephen Lochmueller. Hearing no objection, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

  
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REAGAN TAYLOR, MADISON CO. JUDGE/EXECUTIVE