

Meeting Date: 8/21/2025

Meeting of: Madison County Fiscal Court

Meeting Type: Special Called Work Session

HONORABLE REAGAN TAYLOR COUNTY JUDGE EXECUTIVE PRESIDING

The Madison County Fiscal Court convened in a special called meeting on the 21st of August 2025 at 1:30 PM 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, Stephens Lochmueller, Billy Ray Hughes, and Tom Botkin were present. 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.

IN RE: Discussion of Madison County Emergency Communications Center (MCECC) 911 Funding:

Judge Taylor stated that at the last court meeting, the Fiscal Court asked for the Judge's Office to go back and look at different methodologies and pricing structures for a potential methodology of collecting the 911 fee through water meters, and what it could potentially mean to the unincorporated limits of Madison County.

Jill Williams, Deputy Judge Executive, stated that they have been working with the utility partners in getting the data that they currently have within their utility systems for residential and nonresidential/commercial rates. There are five (5) utility providers in Madison County, and they showcased the number of residential and non-residential meters in each district starting at a \$3.00 monthly fee up to a \$4.50 monthly residential fee. Based on the FY2026 budget numbers, the contribution amount for the County would be \$1,018,640.00. If they selected to do a \$3.00 monthly fee for residential, then there would be a \$10.50 monthly fee for non-residential/commercial.

Magistrate Hughes stated that the first three (3) models provide a deficit, and the last model provides a little surplus. He asked what the outcome would be if they looked at the third scenario with the residential monthly fee being \$4.00 and the commercial/non-residential fee being raised to \$18.00. Jill stated that with that change, the deficit would go to a surplus of \$17,506.24.

Magistrate Hughes stated that if they take into account that the commercial calls account for over half of the 911 calls, it would be reasonable to bump up the commercial fees a little.

Jill stated that they have looked at the call data quite a bit and that from an unincorporated county perspective, there are far more single-family residential parcels than commercial. There is greater risk in commercial properties than in single-family properties, but they need to be mindful of raising that fee amount when there are so few commercial properties.

Judge Taylor stated that one thing they need to think about is that the budget that they are running these numbers off of was created by the task force, which was made up of representatives from all three (3) governments, and projected out for about 20 years with capital costs. If the Court wished, they could put in the language of the Ordinance that there would be an automatic increase based on the CPI every year unless the Fiscal Court acts otherwise, then there would be a little increase to keep up with inflation and rising cost of utilities instead of accounting for it all at one time.

Magistrate Combs stated that if someone doesn't pay that fee, then they wouldn't get the full amount, so there is some risk that could result in them not having a surplus each year. Jill stated that they had looked at that. The water meter data is active data in which people come online

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every day, and people get disconnected. In looking at that, they know that there may be some collections they don't receive but then there may be a new neighborhood that gets added on to the utilities, so it could balance itself out.

Magistrate Hughes stated that looking at the commercial fee amount, it is very little compared to what the commercial fee would have been under the previous suggested model. Jill said that they did look at what the fee would have been in comparison to the potential water meter-based fee. Most non-residential properties would have paid more than \$250 with the parcel model, so an amount less than \$250 would be a savings for non-residential properties within the unincorporated county limits.

Judge Taylor stated that no matter the size of the commercial business, in this model they all have the same fee amount and isn't sure that is fair.

Magistrate Combs stated that if they change the third scenario from \$15.00 a month to \$16.25 a month for commercial properties and leave the residential properties at \$4.00 a month, it allows them to break even, which is the goal.

Judge Taylor stated that they can't choose a rate today that will be the same next year. The way they are looking at making the interlocal agreement, is that each jurisdiction's fee is based on usage.

Magistrate Combs stated that annexation would also change the usage distribution.

Jill stated that the proposed rates are based on the \$1,018,640 but believes there needs to be a cushion in whatever model is decided.

Judge Taylor reminded the Court that law states that the money collected can only be used for 911 purposes and doesn't go into the General Fund.

Magistrate Combs stated that the best part about this is that it is locally controlled based on the best interests of Madison County; the State doesn't dictate what funding mechanism is to be used.

Magistrate Botkin stated that over the course of his time on the Fiscal Court, the county has grown enough that they have been able to reduce property taxes, so he isn't sure about adding a CPI to allow for an increase when they know growth will happen. He stated that this proposed model is more equitable and fairer across the board than the previous model in his opinion; it is close to what the public had been paying on the landline fees.

Jill stated that they try to be as equitable as possible no matter what the model used. One of the major complaints they heard previously with the parcel fee was that the property owners were incurring the cost of the 911 services instead of their tenants. Now, with the water meter model, they are having the opposite argument from the tenants of why they are incurring the cost instead of the property owner since they are paying rent. Jill explained that 911 is a service that is provided not because someone called 911, but giving everyone the ability to call one number and the resources it takes to get that responder there as quickly as possible. The alternative would be, like in years past, where a different number would have to be called based on the emergency and hoping that someone is there to answer that call. The goal of the Fiscal Court is how to be as fair and equitable as possible to the greatest number of citizens.

Judge Taylor stated he believes they need to get an agreed upon interlocal agreement signed by all three (3) entities and then they could decide what the next steps are. The model that is chosen would have to go through the PSC (Public Service Commission), with the best-case scenario being that the collection would start in January 2026. That would mean they would be half-way through the fiscal year before they start collecting the fee.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that it has been brought up by citizens and he wanted to ask again if Madison County had looked at other counties/cities within the Commonwealth are doing and

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how they are collecting a 911 fee. Jill explained that across the state, there are four (4) methodologies that have gone through the supreme court and are shown to be a usable methodology for collecting a 911 fee. Those methodologies are the landline fee, which is becoming antiquated, the parcel fee which is what was previously proposed by the task force, the water meter fee which is what is proposed now, and an electric meter fee. The electric meter is only used by one (1) or two (2) entities across the state, with the water meter and parcel model being the two (2) methodologies that are used most often, and everyone is moving away from landlines. She went through a list of the surrounding counties and what methodology they use, stating that it is based on what is best for the citizens and that local governing entity.

Judge Taylor asked, of those counties that collect on the parcel fees, what was their methodology of collection. Jill stated that there are a lot of counties that collect on the property tax bill, but a couple self-collect through their finance office. She also stated that there are a couple communities that collect doing a couple methodologies, i.e. collect a landline fee and a water meter fee.

Judge Taylor stated that when they pass the Ordinance with whichever new methodology is selected, they would rescind the old ordinance (07-11) which would get rid of the landline fee county wide. As of now, the landline fee is still in place until action is taken for it to go away. Magistrate Hughes and Magistrate Botkin stated that they believe a decision should be made on the methodology for the County before the interlocal agreement is complete. Judge Taylor expressed his concern about what would transpire if one of the other entities didn't approve the interlocal agreement. In the interlocal agreement that was approved by all three (3) entities in January 2025 is the agreement they are still working under. That agreement states that for an entity to get out of it, they have to give notice within so many days, or it all has to be amended, which is what they are working on now. Jill stated that both city's governing bodies had indicated that they would act on amending the agreement in September 2025.

Magistrate Combs asked where the schools and universities are placed in this water meter model. Jill stated that it depends on what type of water meter they have. If the school/university/church is tax exempt, they would be on the residential rate because the commercial rate has a tax on it. She reminded the Court that the universities and most schools are within the City of Richmond or City of Berea limits. She also stated that if a property doesn't receive a water bill, they will not receive a 911 fee.

Magistrate Botkin stated that this will be something they will have to look at and vote on every year.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that if they add the CPI into the agreement, then they would just vote if they don't want to have an automatic increase for that year.

Jill stated that in the two (2) weeks since this was initially proposed in Court, they have received a lot of feedback, which has been very positive and supportive.

The Magistrates agreed that the feedback they received has been positive.

Judge Taylor asked if there is anything else that they would need to consider to be put in the Ordinance.

Magistrate Combs asked if the interlocal agreement would address the 911 Board and thus give people the opportunity to appeal to the Board. Judge Taylor stated that there is still a 911 Board, but the appeal process won't exist with this model. They are working on the interlocal agreement and changing the budgeting process since the funding has now been split up with all three (3) governing bodies finding their own funding mechanism. Jill also stated that there hasn't been any discussion from any governing bodies that the makeup of the 911 Public Safety Advisory Board be any different, so it would exist as it was. The agreement states that they must meet quarterly,

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but they choose to meet monthly, and the meetings are all open meetings. If someone has an issue with the operations of the 911 or with the service they are providing, they can go before the 911 Public Safety Advisory Board.

Magistrate Botkin asked if they have decided to go with \$4 fee for residential and \$18 for non-residential. Judge Taylor stated that it would be whatever the Court would like; they could also put in the Ordinance some different options and they can vote on which one they would prefer after they have some time to think about it.

Magistrate Lochmueller stated that he would like to have some time to think over the numbers to make sure everything is covered.

Magistrate Combs asked if they had looked at the fee based on call volume. Jill explained that 82% of the parcels are residential, and the ratio is so imbalanced that they would probably not ever make up the difference in the number of commercial calls based on such an extreme number of residential properties; there just aren't enough commercial properties. Chris also stated that there is more risk associated with commercial properties because there will be multiple agencies that will be communicating with multiple dispatchers.

Judge Taylor stated that they will go back to work on an updated Ordinance to present to the Court soon.

ANNOUNCE NEXT COURT DATE:

Judge Taylor announced the next court date for August 26, 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 James Brian Combs. Hearing no objection, the meeting was adjourned at 2:32 PM.


REAGAN TAYLOR, MADISON CO. JUDGE/EXECUTIVE