Meeting Notes – May 3, 2022

The Rotary Club of LaFayette met on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, for a program and a meal. President Abby Adams and Program Chair Chris Busby arranged for Debra Riley, chairperson of the Chambers County Commission, to speak to us. Mrs. Riley reviewed the primary responsibilities of the commission: the roads and bridges in Chambers County; overseeing the budget (approximately $37.5 million, most of which is already earmarked), including audits; and the Chambers County jail building itself (not the people running the jail or the prisoners).

Our commission is comprised of six elected commissioners. This varies county by county. She reports that they work together very well and are able to keep their focus on the big picture, all of Chambers County, and are not solely focused on just their individual district. There is a new chairperson every year. That position rotates among the members. The commissioners have the option of changing the way the chairperson is selected, but this method is working well for them right now. The commission holds a two-hour work session at the beginning of each year to select the projects they want to focus on during the year.

Mrs. Riley spoke on the $6.4 million in American Recovery Act funds that the county has received. About $1 million will be dedicated to road paving, according to the county's 5-year plan. Another $3 million will go toward water expansion. About a half of a million dollars is set aside for broadband expansion. More details will be released in November about that project. Most of the cost of broadband expansion will be covered by grants.

Currently there are two assessments going on. One involves the conditions of the county buildings, most of which have roofs that are 20-30 years old. The county Extension building is being evaluated to see if it is worth renovating. It has already been determined that the old section of the jail is not salvageable. The second assessment involves the air quality inside those buildings. Once the assessments are in, difficult decisions will have to be made. There is simply not enough money to address all the needs.

Three short-term goals have recently been addressed, all involving creating or revising policies. One dealt with credit cards. There was no concern with any misuse, it was just having too many credit cards assigned. Another dealt with political campaigns with the desire to make if official that everyone coming into a county office is treated equally, regardless of their political affiliation. Again, this had not been an issue, but the commission wanted to go on record to stress the importance of this. The third was an internet policy which would include employees not using county computers for personal use during break or lunch times, or any other time.

Diane Sherriff