

COMMISSION MINUTES

April 4, 2014

Minutes of the emergency meeting of the Sevier County Commissioners held this fourth day of April, 2014. Meeting commenced at 11:00 a.m. with Commissioners Gary Mason, Garth 'Tooter' Ogden and Gordon Topham in the Commission Chambers of the Sevier County Administration Building, 250 North Main, Richfield, Utah. Clerk/Auditor Steven C. Wall, and Executive Administrator Malcolm Nash were also present.

Commissioner Topham reported that there has been a lot of misinformation concerning the proposed round-up of cattle by the Bureau of Land Management in the southern Nevada area and bringing them to Sevier County to be sold at auction. He said he is concerned because of the misinformation and the emotions of a lot of people. He said there have been threats of violence, including bloodshed, and he is very concerned of what may or may not happen here in Sevier County at the auction and also for the owner of the auction who has contracted with the Bureau of Land Management to auction the cattle for them. He said that there has been a lot of information that the cattle will be here the first part of this next week, and he feels that there could be a way for the BLM to hold off on transporting the cattle here to give the people a chance to learn what is actually happening. He said that a lot of people are frightened and sometimes actions are taken in desperation without taking the time to educate themselves and understand what is really going on. He recommended that because of the high volatility and emotions that are being expressed, that the Commission put forth some effort to inform the Bureau of Land Management of their concerns, and possibly delay their actions for a short time to allow some negotiation and education to take place. Commissioner Mason said that they are not asking anyone to do anything radical, but to use some common sense and sit down to discuss some of the items to see what needs to be done. Commissioner Ogden expressed his concerns for the local auction owner to be made whole from his contract, and also for his safety. The local citizens are concerned with the cattle bringing disease to the area and/or escaping from the auction and mixing with their cattle. Discussion followed that a lot of the information that is out is not valid, that the BLM has followed their procedure, that the order is coming from the Federal Court authorizing and allowing them to collect and sell the cattle, and noting that the owner should have done something prior to this time about the grazing fees. The Commission noted that most of the local ranchers support the government action, and feel that the owner should have done something sooner. Commissioner Topham then reviewed what has happened, noting that the BLM has been in Federal Court in Las Vegas for quite some time to get the issue resolved, according to the information that he has, and that the cattle owner has not paid the grazing fees for several years. The BLM is finally taking action to remove the cattle from the grazing area where the permit fees have not been paid. The understanding is that the unbranded cattle will be sold and the money will return to the State of Nevada, that the cattle with the Bundy brand will be sold with the money going to the BLM, and those that have other brands from other owners will be held for a period to allow the owners to claim the other cattle and only sold if unclaimed with the money going to the BLM. Some concerns have been expressed about the cattle being able to be transported out of Nevada and sold, whether or not they need to stay in Nevada, and whether the BLM has the authority to even sell them.

Sheriff Curtis, who had joined the meeting later, reported that he has been in discussion with the cattle owners, the BLM, and most everyone involved to work with them. He said that there is no legal way to stop the process. He reported that the Clark County Sheriff in Nevada has required the BLM to follow all of the proper procedures before allowing them to round-up or collect the cattle, and follow the judicial process. Sheriff Curtis did also express his concern of some of the things that have been said and done by ranchers and politicians, both in Utah and Nevada, and is concerned for the safety of our local auction business owner and the cattlemen here.

After further discussion, and because of the high volatility, the Commission felt that action needed to be taken at this time because the information they have states that the cattle may be coming as soon as the coming week, Commissioner Mason stated that because of the information discussed, and because the cattle coming will cause considerable unrest, he motioned to deem this as an emergency in our County and authorize the emergency meeting, second Commissioner Ogden, unanimous.

The Commissioners then reviewed a draft resolution that Commissioner Topham had prepared and presented, discussing changes and clarifications in it. After discussion, Commissioner Ogden then moved to adopt Resolution 2014-4-1 concerning the cattle confiscated by the Federal Government in Nevada scheduled to be transported to and sold in Sevier County with the changes to the draft expressing their concerns and requesting the sale be postponed for a short time to allow correct information to be distributed, second Commissioner Mason, unanimous.

There being no further business to come before the Board, meeting adjourned at 11:45 p.m.