

The Balancing Act of Governing- Evaluating Assets by Ron Woody, Roane County Executive

Changing Government by Research, Study, and Analysis

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Students in business school learn that successful businesses use assets to generate revenue. An individual who purchases a lawnmower to mow yards only makes money when the lawnmower is in use mowing yards. The same can be said of a trucking company, a lawyer or an accountant. One must be using the asset, whether it is a physical asset or an intellectual asset, in order to receive benefit from the asset.

The Roane County government through the County Commission has instituted a program to evaluate the taxpayer assets in order to see if we have assets that are underutilized in their current function. The following is a list of successful actions taken by the Roane County Commission to improve asset efficiency:

1. Adoption and implementation by the commission of a policy that requires with the purchase of a vehicle, an older vehicle must be surplus. If the department desires to retain the older asset, then a written request must be filed with the Property Committee and approved to retain the older asset. This policy arose due to a number of vehicles remaining in the fleet and on the county's liability insurance while not being utilized.
2. The commission also approved the transfer of four pieces of real property which were under long term, \$1/year leases. The properties were transferred with some restrictions to non-profits and a municipality. The transfers removed the properties from Roane County's insurance and placed it with organizations for more productive use. These properties were:
 - a. The old Edgewood Elementary School property on Gallaher Road was transferred to the Michael Dunn Center. Michael Dunn Center has the option to sell this property for retail or light industrial use. The current use of the property is no longer the highest and best use of the property.
 - b. The Gertrude Potter field adjacent to the old Greenwood School property was transferred to the City of Kingston for use as a recreation area. Kingston has received a \$250,000 grant for the improvement of this property.
 - c. The old Greenwood School building was transferred to the Roane County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP is interested in investing in the building as their chapter headquarters.
 - d. A football field adjacent to the old Pond Grove School in Rockwood was transferred to the Rockwood Rams Quarterback Club for use in their recreation program.
3. The repurposing of the old jail facility went through a process of several decisions. The question whether to reuse or raze the building was the primary consideration. After evaluation, the county determined the building was structurally sound enough to be remodeled. An approximately \$180,000 investment yielded the county a multi-use facility that houses the Juvenile Center, Sheriff's Investigative Unit, records storage and Emergency Management

laundry facility. This reuse has allowed a shifting of records storage from the third floor of the courthouse. This shift was necessary due to concerns about the weight of the records and the possible structural compromise of the third floor. The movement of the Juvenile officers has allowed better space utilization within the General Sessions Court offices. The remodel also allowed the juvenile holding facility in Midtown to be vacated. The old juvenile facility in Midtown is being renovated for use by the Roane County Agricultural Extension office. Moving the Agricultural Extension office from the third floor of the courthouse opened those offices up for use by the county reappraisal program. Another benefit is that the Extension office hosts meetings in the evening for the general public on a variety of topics. To hold these meeting within the courthouse required the presence of a Security Officer from the Sheriff's Department. By meeting in the new facility, the cost of the Security Officer is saved for each meeting. The property reappraisal program does not have to rent space for their reappraisal work this year which is another savings of taxpayer dollars.

A combination of plans and impact of the plans were reviewed and studied by the Commission before these decisions were made. The completion of the Agricultural Extension facility is the final project and is anticipated to be complete in December 2014.

We continue to look at various county assets to see if we need to purchase an asset, dispose of an asset or repurpose an asset in order to achieve the maximum efficiency within the operations of your county government. We are looking at a few other areas of investment, such as:

1. Riley Creek Campground;
2. Back Tax property owned by the county;
3. Old Caney Creek Campground as an equestrian riding trail.

The Roane County Property Committee, Back Tax Committee, County Commission and County Executive's staff thank you for your support as we continue to evaluate, repurpose and reuse the county's assets.