

ALFRED CARROLL SR.



1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? First, let me say, that I did not remember my Bible, Ephesians 6:12. I regret not knowing to what extremes the County Judge would go to maintain absolute power; ignoring the Arkansas Constitution, state laws and/or his unfamiliarity with parliamentary procedures. What citizens witnessed and the news media reported, was not a meltdown of county government, but rather the County Judge refusing to follow Arkansas Laws, Roberts Rules of order and respect for the separation of powers of the three branches of government.

I did not know he would use my Republican colleagues and the County Attorney to hold the Democratic majority hostage. Nor did I know the County Judge would use tax payer's money (\$400-\$800) monthly to pay Mr. Donald to harass quorum court members in person and on the radio station he works for. I will continue appealing to my Republican colleagues to follow the Arkansas Constitution when deciding Quorum Court issues. Secondly, I will appeal to the Judge to demonstrate more transparency in his management style. I will also ask the County Attorney to be more, straightforward with his legal opinions, stop rebuffing questions from certain court members and stop requiring certain Quorum Court members to submit their questions to him in writing after meetings have ended. I hope to study proposed legislation more closely and continue to demonstrate respect for Robert's Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedures.

Most importantly I will seek more community involvement and better inform citizens of the workings of county government. Finally, I will reach out more to the media, use more social media and hold public meetings to get the truth out. More transparency and inclusion will be a great start in restoring trust and a sense of comradery among all County elected officials.

2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? During the remainder of my current term, I have already begun to give more attention to the Youth Program i.e. Group Violence Intervention program, an incentivized reading program for our Juvenile detainees, and recognition of area school Valedictorians and Salutatorians in area schools. Some monies have been appropriated. Additional conversation must be had on how it is spent. As county officials we simply need to get more involved. I have made a personal financial pledge to the recognition of the school's Valedictorians and Salutatorians and will ask other interested persons to do the same. Schools where detainees normally attend would be asked to assist with some of the record-keeping and reading literature.

Grant monies or private donations would be used to provide incentives and would be awarded to participating detainees upon their release.

Secondly, I want to see a full-time computer-savvy director of veteran services hired. Military officials suggest that area veterans and Jefferson County are missing hundreds of thousands of dollars in benefits, revolving revenue and taxes because of a lack of service. Thirdly, I will continue proposing new legislation consistent with the Arkansas Constitution and the County's needs that will institute more transparency and be a legislative reference for future County Elected Officials.

3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them? As the elected District 1 Justice of the Peace and Citizen, I am deeply concerned that, District 1 has become a food desert. There is not one grocery store in the boundaries of District 1. While I have communicated with elected City officials, I have not been invited to participate in a possible solution. This, I believe, is the most urgent concern of citizens living in District 1. On this issue I believe we should be advertising, making appeals and seeking out grocery store providers that have a history of providing services in heavily populated African American communities and/or are looking to establish a footprint in the South.

Secondly, all of downtown Pine Bluff, the seat of Jefferson, is within the boundaries of District 1. I think all elected officials ought to be involved in helping to develop ideas/plans to revive/improve downtown.

We see some of the work City Government/Urban Renewal is involved with, but the citizens don't know the how, why or what they can do to help.

It might even be feasible for the county to renovate one or combine two properties close to the Court House, creating a more spacious, more modern, public-accommodating Quorum Court meeting facility.

I think it would be a great action to hold bi-monthly meetings with the citizens of District 1, to share progress and some of the whys behind government actions. The various levels of elected officials need to have a designated time to meet and share information. Citizens expect me, as an elected official to know something about every situation.

4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them? The truth is, as a JP, I know very little about the plans of the County Judge when it comes to the repair or the normal scheduled maintenance of county roads. Members of the Quorum Court have asked for a schedule of planned road work, but it has not been presented. This is an area that needs greater transparency. I want to know and Jefferson County citizens need to know. The County Judge, alone, is in complete control of all road work. There are rumors that the county has little road work equipment on hand. Some equipment appears to have been auctioned off. The fixing of county roads may be performed mostly by private contractors, meaning Jefferson County roads have to take a number. A published schedule for the repair and upkeep of county roads should be placed on the Jefferson County website. However, I would continue asking citizens who are negatively impacted by county roads that are in disrepair, to call the County Judge's office, come to Quorum Court meetings and even ask Quorum Court members to visit/travel roads in question.

5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period?

Because of Judge Robinson's refusal to recognize the 2024 Procedural Ordinance drafted (2/24) and approved (6/24) by a majority of the Quorum Court and his pending lawsuit, filed (9/24) the Quorum Court has been forced to work between two competing agendas. [A. C. A. 14-14-904 (b)(1)(A)(i)], requires the Tax Levy to be passed by the Quorum Court in its regular November/December meeting. The tax levy ordinance was first listed on the Finance Committee's agenda on November 7, 2023. The measure passed 8 to 0 during a roll call vote. The Tax Levy Ordinance was placed on the Quorum Court's agenda on November 20, 2023. The measure was passed 8 to 0 in a roll call vote. On November 28, 2023, Judge Robinson vetoed this and 4 other pieces of legislation.

In keeping with ARKANSAS CODE 14-14-912 (a) A measure to overturn Judge Robinson's veto was placed on the Quorum Courts December 11, 2023, agenda. Judge Robinson denied Quorum Court members, access to the Quorum Court Room. The meeting was moved to the Circuit Courtroom. The County Judge refused to chair the meeting. Quorum Court members acted, ACA 14-14-904 and voted that Justice Carroll would preside over the meeting. Under ACA,14-14-912 (a) by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, Quorum Court members, voted and overturned the judge's veto. The minutes were recorded by the County Clerk's office. Proceedings were broadcast by the Pine Bluff Commercial News Media.

This was man made crisis. The County, our schools, and public services were never in jeopardy. During this period, I communicated with City/State elected officials, Educators, Clergy and citizens; so the Quorum Court would not fail to pass the Tax Levy. In the future, I will reach out to the media more, use more social media and hold public meetings to get the truth out.

6. Anything else you want to say? Interested persons should read Amendment 55, Arkansas Laws A.C.A. 14-14-904, and others, that pertain to the functions of county government and elected officials.

Readers would discover that many of the actions taken/demonstrated by our current County Judge are not in keeping with the spirit of the law and his constitutional authority.

They would also learn that the Quorum Court has the legal responsibility to create ordinances/rules. The County Judge has the responsibility to carry out these rules. Only a Justice of the Peace can sponsor an ordinance and appropriate county tax dollars. Quorum Court members are not under the authority, direction or control of the County Judge or persons on his staff. The County Judge by law is to preside at Quorum Court meeting without the right to enter into debate or vote.

I would ask our citizens, why are a majority of Quorum Court members refuse to blindly support some proposed actions pushed by the County Judge and why is nearly \$60,000 of Jefferson County taxpayer dollars being funneled to a local radio DJ, his family and associates to denigrate county officials that speak truth to power?

Additionally, I would ask our citizens questions why three years of State Audit reports have not been placed on a Quorum Courts agenda, why \$70,000 was misappropriated in the Judges office, why 25 cell phone accounts were paid for with County tax money and why a proposed \$20,000 raise for his Administrative Assistant.

The public needs to know, that every year thousands of dollars are budgeted for the road department for up upkeep of county roads. A maintenance schedule for the repair of county roads should be placed on the Jefferson County website.

GARLAND TRICE

1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? Beginning with the second part of the question, having lived in Justice of the Peace, District 1, for over 35 years my concerns surfaced long before the 2023 meltdown. When I saw the construction of new buildings and I monitored who was doing the work, looking and watching for Black-owned contractors, I saw none. It bothered me enough to contact the County Judge's Office. I was very surprised and happy to learn that the financial arrangement for the construction was for minorities and folks who looked like myself were doing the work. Plus many other folks were working. The County Judge kept me informed along the construction process and I attended the Veteran's grand opening, a very nice facility. What I witnessed was an Elected Official finally doing something positive in my community. Then I learned 2023 early on that chaos existed and Rules Of Procedures had not been established during the first meeting, a mandatory requirement, and worst case they should be implemented during the second Quorum Court's meeting. The best that I can tell, the rules have not been put in place for 2023 and 2024. My First concern, if elected, is to follow the rules and learn the JP handbook that governs JP members. Although not elected, I attend committee meetings and regular Quorum Court meetings to show my concerns. Plus, I decided to run for the District 1 seat when I saw firsthand a major problem. I knew that now was the time to step up and try to continue the progress that I had witnessed.



Two final thoughts: 1. When I go to a Quorum Court meeting I will have reviewed the agenda and prepare myself for the meeting. 2. I will always be on time.

Finally, my 40-plus years of business experience have caused me to listen. If Elected I will visit and listen to all residents in District 1 and Jefferson County. I will work with JPs and the County Judge. I will host a Town Hall Event every JP term. Yes, 2023 was a disaster that never should have happened. Note: Written Rules of decorum, maybe even a dress code may be in order if we learned anything about 2023.

2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? Goal 1: Connect the Downtown area to Highway 79 North by extending Convention Center Drive to Highway 79 North close by and along the waterway and walking track, exiting just North of PJs on Highway 79 North. I believe that this project should be a joint venture with the County and City 50/50. I would seek out the help of the First Ward Alderman and Alderwoman for their help with business input and raising funds, grants, governor office funds, multiple agencies and participation from Core of Engineers and the Arkansas State Hwy.

If all else fails then maybe some type of bond initiative. Also, SBA should be considered. No tax should ever be on the table for this goal.

Goal 2: Extend and expand the current solar systems located behind the juvenile center to other County Departments. All sources of money listed above should be considered for goal # 2. Please

- consider the benefit of the goals listed such as**
- Homecoming traffic flow, eliminating traffic jams.**
 - Jefferson County residents north of the River Bridge can shortcut to downtown and the Casino without fear ever of homecoming traffic.**
 - Farmers have a direct route to grain mills and other businesses in the industrial area in the Packing Town area.**
 - Student safety around the college area.**
 - Bicycle trail from Downtown to UAPB.**

Now is the time to grow our Population by giving people reasons to move back or to visit our city and county. Now is the right time for a high-profile new business zone and recruit new businesses to raise our tax base. I believe that this facility should be visible from a main highway.

3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them? JP District 1 is right in the middle of Ward 1 in the city of Pine Bluff. Streetlights are key to a safer city. Police cameras throughout District 1 are needed because Ward 1 and District 1 are home to the majority of our major businesses and city and county offices. I have run and fought for these issues for many years. The question, now in my mind, is can county funds overlap within our city limit. In my opinion, they should and I will inquire if elected to Distract 1.

I have not ever seen a street-level benefit in the community but I have raised the issues with the County Judge. I will use the legislative methods, Resolutions and Ordinances in achieving outcomes.

4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them? The Jefferson County Road Department before 2023 under the leadership of the current County Judge and before the 2023 meltdown, had acquired new heavy equipment. Now county roads and bridge work will be noticed. The workforce level needs to be enhanced to meet the resident's demands to fix potholes. JPs will have to pay close attention to their District and this will require a level of patience from the public because of hundreds of miles of county roads.

Although District 1 is totally within Ward 1, there are no county roads in District 1. Allows me time to visit other districts and help inform our citizens on what is being done to improve their lives and county roads and bridges. Jefferson County would benefit from a hotline to better address the resident's concerns and needs. I will introduce a resolution to the Jefferson County Quorum Court for a Complaint Registry. For too long our citizens have gotten lots of false promises and lies without any accountability whatsoever. Yes, in my opinion, the response time for complaints has been timely. The bottom line is a line of communication that will give notice to our citizens that elected officials are working on their behalf.

5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period? Folks let me be clear, I am a long-time business person and I have run large statewide nonprofit organizations that levied taxes and fees within, and if someone failed to do their part, that created a strain on the overall health of our organization.

I witnessed firsthand JPs' illegal actions and unofficial meetings and their failure to pay County bills, yet those eight JPs Stand like BOZO TO GET PAID FOR THEMSELVES. Their conduct was shameful and a disgrace. Holding meetings without proper notice to the public and the press, not to mention the levels of chaos and bedlam by the ring leaders, even I was even confronted by my opponent for videoing him during a Quorum Court meeting. My clear intentions were to pressure my opponent to do the right thing and pass the yearly tax levy legislation that affects a broad section of our community. The local businesses, school officials, local fire departments and minority-owned businesses are not being paid. Even women-owned businesses were not being paid made any sense at all and were a public disgrace. Not to mention the county's inability to levy taxes for the entire next year told the story about those eight JPs' actions designed to enrich themselves and take over the County Government. The real question in my mind is whether those eight JPs fit this prestigious office. I don't think any of those eight deserve another day in our County Government. The public played a pivotal and important role in forcing those eight JPs to do the right thing and not cause a county-wide shutdown. Never would I cause my community any fear or harm to businesses in which you are elected to serve. If elected, county business shall always be front and center in my deliberations.

6. Anything else you want to say? My bold thought and vision for Pine Bluff and Jefferson County, Arkansas is a MAIN ATTRACTION that will cause persons, couples and whole families to visit our city and county, maybe even considering making our city and county their home. My hope and wish are that my thought does not fall on deaf ears.