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**Washington County Commissioners Upgrade Old Voting System to New, Improved Voting System Monday**

*(Jonesborough, Tenn.)* — Now that their old clicker-based electronic voting system is no longer upgradeable, Washington County Commissioners will launch their first meeting of the new year with a new OpenMeeting Technologies voting system. It is a new, app-based version of the old system that reached end-of-life at the end of 2022.

Initial training took place Tuesday, January 10 in Courtroom 7 of the courthouse where the commission meetings are held. Taking part in the training session were County Clerk Cheryl Storey and Deputy County Clerk Lora Scalf along with Commission Chair Greg Matherly, Vice Chair Jim Wheeler and tech support provided by BCTI. An OpenMeeting Technologies representative was present on Zoom to provide training and answer questions.

All commissioners will undergo a one-hour tech training session prior to the January 23 meeting where they will learn how to log into and use their new SurfacePro's. The new electronic voting system will be used to vote, make motions and manage discussion with a speaker queue and built-in timer. New features allow for improved transparency with enhanced video and audio connections.

“We used the clickers until the technology became obsolete at the end of last year,” said Matherly. “The MS Surface Pro platform is a major upgrade and will be available for all Commissioners to vote January 23. I expect it will take some getting used to and we will have to iron out a few things but that’s completely normal when adapting to new technology.” Matherly said that the new system will ultimately be more streamlined and easier to use than what commissioners have had in the past.

“Ultimately this is about increasing transparency to the public,” said Matherly. All votes will be automatically saved for the County Clerk. If there are questions about certain votes, the

media and/or members of the public will be able to easily see the screen, including final vote tallies. The upgraded visual display will improve commissioner and citizen experience.

“It’s pretty easy on their (commissioners) end,” said Jill Lodewegen from OpenMeeting Technologies. “Because it’s an app, what they see is what they will need at that moment. The feedback from other Tennessee counties has been excellent, particularly about the updated vote tally display.”

An ad hoc panel of county representatives and technical experts met last fall and passed on their upgrade recommendation to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee met November 3, 2022 and approved the new system that includes a 5-year plan with 10% discount cost of \$22,950. That breaks down to \$7,500 initial cost plus \$4,500 per year maintenance fee.

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