

MINUTES
THIRD BUDGET MEETING OF THE
COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2015
5:00 o'clock p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: The third budget meeting for Fiscal Year 2015 - 2016 was called to order at 5:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Terry R. Clark. The meeting was duly called and advertised.

PRESENT: Those present were Commissioners Luke Strong, Winfred Giddens, Marc DeMott, Donna Herndon, Paul Nagy, Johnny Hardin, Chairman Terry R. Clark, County Administrator Chas Cannon, Finance Director Wayne Putnal, and County Clerk Melissa Lawson.

ALSO PRESENT: Solid Waste Manager Stacy Griffin, E-911 Director Teresa Warburg, and Alan Mauldin with the Moultrie Observer.

Mr. Cannon gave a brief overview of funds and budgets reviewed by the board thus far, noting a 10% decrease in property tax revenue.

GENERAL UPDATES: At this time, Mr. Cannon informed the board of two interviews that he had given earlier that day, to Fox 31 News and WALB News, respectively. Mr. Cannon informed the board that the topics discussed included the potential millage rate increase and a recent leak due to a pipe blockage at the Courthouse.

Mr. Cannon also stated that he and Lester Castellow, County Attorney, had a positive meeting with Tony Lasseter regarding construction of the road to the new high school.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if the county had solicited bids regarding contractor labor for construction of the road. Mr. Cannon stated that once the engineering process was complete, the county would be ready to accept bids for this service.

Mr. Cannon also noted that the potential sale of surplus county property could possibly close within the next month.

FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016 BUDGET CONTINUED: Mr. Cannon reviewed an updated list of options for the commissioners to consider regarding the proposed budget.

Mr. Cannon stated that there had been no Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases for county employees since 2007 and reviewed the county's employee recruitment and retention issues with the board.

Mr. Cannon stated that he, along with Wayne Putnal, Finance Director, had recently eliminated approximately \$190,000.00 in minor cuts during a thorough review of the budget.

Mr. Cannon proceeded to review a list of savings to be realized in the future but not currently included in the budget, including reductions in healthcare, energy audit savings,

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possible outsourcing of various functions, and the possibility of increased prisoner reimbursement funding from the state.

Mr. Cannon suggested sending Justin H. Cox, Chief Compliance Officer, to a seminar being offered by Congressman Austin Scott in order to take advantage of eligible grant funding for public safety departments.

Mr. Cannon mentioned the importance of continued communication with state legislators and the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) regarding the impact of state mandated costs, which currently comprise 51% of the county's budget.

In an effort to save money, Mr. Cannon also proposed that the county collect its own refuse at county owned buildings within the city limits. In addition, Mr. Cannon mentioned the recent Request for Proposal (RFP) regarding property and liability insurance coverage for the county, explaining that the purpose was to solicit competitive bids in order to insure the best coverage at the lowest possible price.

Mr. Cannon reviewed a list of changes to the proposed budget, including elimination of the proposed .02 millage increase in both the Unincorporated and Incorporated areas of the county.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the estimated proceeds to be received if the sale of county property were to close. Mr. Cannon stated that approximately \$2,670,000.00 was expected from the sale, and again mentioned his recommendation that approximately \$750,000.00 of capital purchases included in the proposed budget be funded through these proceeds.

Mr. Cannon further stated that if the sale did not close, necessary equipment purchases could be funded through SPLOST proceeds.

At this time, Wayne Putnal, Finance Director, mentioned a plan to modify an existing piece of equipment to function as a mower, in an effort to utilize existing resources and save money. Commissioner Nagy questioned the savings that would result from this modification.

Mr. Putnal stated that this would save approximately \$50,000.00 to \$60,000.00.

Mr. Cannon pointed out that the county had already realized savings and proceeds from transporting surplus equipment items to be sold at auction.

Commissioner Nagy addressed the proposed 1.5 millage rate increase in the Unincorporated areas of the county, questioning what liability, if any, the county would face if it did not raise the millage.

Mr. Cannon stated that the board did have the option to reduce the proposed 1.5 millage rate increase, but further stated that he did not recommend it.

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Commissioner Nagy questioned how the discrepancy concerning gross M&O millage rates between the Unincorporated and Incorporated areas could have existed for so long.

At this time, Commissioner Strong requested information concerning the ongoing negotiations with Colquitt Regional Medical Center regarding healthcare.

Mr. Cannon explained that healthcare costs were substantial and that negotiations with Jim Matney, CEO of Colquitt Regional Medical Center, were ongoing in an effort to reduce claim costs.

Commissioner Strong asked if the reductions in costs were guaranteed.

Mr. Cannon replied that they were, and stated that the reductions in costs were also extended to the City of Moultrie. Mr. Cannon explained that savings would also be realized through the reduction of deductibles and premiums.

Mr. Cannon stated that Mr. Matney would present his proposal to the board.

Commissioner Hardin stated that although savings had already been realized regarding healthcare, the overall budget for the Employee Health Insurance Fund had still increased.

(Commissioner Donna Herndon and Alan Maudlin entered the meeting at 5:29 p.m.)

Commissioner Giddens questioned who made the determination to transport an inmate to the hospital. Mr. Cannon replied that this decision was made by the nurse or county physician, and if these individuals were not on duty, the on duty Sergeant would make the decision.

Commissioner Nagy questioned if the county anticipated any relief in the number of individuals that were incarcerated.

Mr. Cannon stated that recent reform by Governor Nathan Deal would reduce the number of low level drug offenders. However, Mr. Cannon stated that in order to keep the prison open, increased reimbursement from the state was imperative.

Chairman Clark remarked that prison populations were down, state-wide.

Commissioner Strong mentioned the request from Roads and Bridges to transition away from the utilization of inmate labor, and questioned if the county would still have to house the inmates in question. Mr. Cannon replied that the inmates were state inmates, and could be sent back per the contractual agreement with the Department of Corrections, given proper notice regarding termination of the contract.

Mr. Cannon stated that some productivity was obtained via the utilization of inmate labor in certain areas and applications, but due to the fact that the county was not receiving reimbursement of actual costs to house these inmates, the value of that low labor cost must exceed the costs to operate the prison.

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Commissioner Hardin stated that he understood, but still couldn't comprehend the value of transitioning away from inmate labor, stating that he had seen it hurt too many counties. He further stated that he did not understand how the county could afford the costs of the contracted labor suggested to replace the inmate labor.

Commissioner Hardin also referred to the suggested equipment purchases in the current budget in order to facilitate the transition away from inmate labor, stating that this equipment would eventually need to be replaced, and declared that someone had to consider the burden that property owners face.

Commissioner Hardin stated that the commission must research ways in which decrease the overall budget.

Mr. Putnal stated that Colquitt County possessed the 17th largest road network in the state, and further stated that the scope of services that the county provides necessitates adequate funding in order to efficiently perform them.

Commissioner Hardin stated that when the prison was moved to its new location, the board knew that they would be faced with the issues of transportation and lost time.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if the Warden could transport the inmates to the various departments in order to reduce the loss of productivity, and declared that the board must consider options such as this in order to reduce the impact on taxpayers.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he would have like to have known the impact of correcting the millage rate discrepancy by raising in one area and lowering in the other.

Commissioner Hardin declared that the majority of the proposed budget was a want list, and stated that he would prefer that the board research the budget further in order to determine areas in which the budget could be decreased.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he could not support the proposed budget as it currently existed.

Commissioner Strong remarked that the millage rate was increased in 2014.

Commissioner Hardin stated that the millage increase in 2014, when combined with the increase in millage rates by the school board, totaled a 4.5 mill increase on taxpayers within the last two years.

Commissioner Hardin stated that citizens understand if you have to raise the millage rate in order to meet needs and provide services, but further stated that there were several vehicle requests included in the proposed budget.

Commissioner Giddens suggested that the board not purchase anything based on speculation.

Commissioner Nagy requested clarification regarding Commissioner Giddens' statement.

Commissioner Giddens stated that funding capital outlay purchases based on SPLOST projections was an excellent example.

Commissioner Nagy stated that 90% of citizens were not spending money but were saving it.

Commissioner Hardin declared that was reflected in SPLOST collections.

Commissioner Herndon stated that when running for her commission seat, she gave a campaign speech on wants versus needs. She further stated that the county must rationalize between what it needs to perform services and what purchases might not be necessary at this time.

Commissioner Herndon suggested determining those purchases necessary in order to provide essential services to the citizens of Colquitt County.

Commissioner Hardin suggested that the board take time to thoroughly review the budget and make an overall, rational decision regarding what was needed to fund county operations.

Commissioner Herndon agreed, stating that the board was responsible for the fiscal health of the county, and would subsequently be held responsible.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he would love to be in a position financially to grant raises and purchase vehicles, but stated that sometimes there was a spending limit to consider, as one would do if operating their own business in the private sector.

Commissioner Giddens stated that the board realized that it had a limited availability of funds, and suggested not committing to spending what the county could not afford.

Mr. Cannon requested that the board consider the discrepancy in the millage rate during the past several years, reminding the board that the millage rate was also decreased in 2007.

Mr. Cannon stated that the suggested 1.5 millage rate increase in the Unincorporated areas was basically what was necessary in order to correct the millage rate discrepancy of the last several years.

SOLID WASTE ENTERPRISE FUND: At this time, Mr. Cannon called upon Stacy Griffin, Solid Waste Manager, to present priorities for the Solid Waste Fund in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Griffin stated that efforts to collect delinquent garbage bills would continue, as well as the performance of field audits in order to determine citizens in violation of the solid waste ordinance.

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Mr. Griffin stated that he planned to continue to advertise the county's proposed light commercial garbage service, and would continue to pursue smaller cities in hopes of acquiring their residential garbage pickup.

Commissioner Strong questioned if the county would need to purchase additional equipment in order to provide the light commercial service.

Mr. Griffin stated that trucks within his current fleet were capable of performing this service.

Commissioner Nagy questioned how the county could compete with private solid waste contractors currently providing residential pickup to the cities in question.

Mr. Griffin stated his belief that these municipalities would prefer a local presence.

Mr. Cannon stated that price was the main factor when considering whether the smaller cities would consider the utilization of county service.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if current trucks within the solid waste fleet were capable of accommodating all refuse collected on a daily route.

Mr. Griffin stated that the trucks possessed the capacity in which dumping could be performed at the landfill every other day, as opposed to on a daily basis.

Discussion ensued regarding pricing for solid waste pickup in smaller municipalities and the benefits of solid waste pickup performed locally.

Mr. Cannon presented a schedule of rates charged by the City of Moultrie regarding their solid waste pickup.

Mr. Cannon presented revenues and expenditures for the Solid Waste Fund, inclusive of both Residential Collections and Landfill Operations, stating that approximately \$600,000.00 was exhausted in order to transport solid waste out of the county.

Mr. Cannon commended Mr. Griffin on the excellent job he has performed thus far as Solid Waste Manager.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if the county had heard anything regarding the feasibility study performed regarding construction of a new landfill. Mr. Cannon stated that currently things looked very positive, and suggested a meeting in June in which to further discuss the feasibility study with the board.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the figure collected regarding delinquent solid waste bills. Mr. Griffin presented these figures to the board, informing them that the next scheduled solid waste tax sale would occur in July.

The levy process was explained and discussed thoroughly by Mr. Griffin.

Mr. Griffin presented some large ticket capital outlay items included in the proposed budget, consisting of a truck, two rear loader garbage trucks, and 550 new garbage carts.

Mr. Griffin stated that the carts were necessary due to the addition of new customers as a result of daily field audits. In addition, Mr. Griffin stated that additional carts would be needed if the proposed commercial garbage service proved to be successful.

Benefits of the buy-back program were discussed, as well as the current mileage regarding the truck for which replacement was being requested.

Additional capital requests were discussed by Mr. Griffin, including upgrading to above ground, digital scales and the installation of an automated gate with cameras in which to accommodate refuse collected by the City of Moultrie.

Mr. Cannon stated that these purchases were essential in order to move forward with the landfill, further stating that there could be no congestion regarding necessary ingress and egress to the landfill.

Mr. Griffin stated the main goal was to expand solid waste operations in order to generate much needed revenue.

Mr. Cannon stated that in light of exemptions regarding property tax revenue and the existence of the Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) card, the pursuit of additional revenue sources, such as the landfill, was essential.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if the exemptions mentioned did not always exist for farmers.

Chairman Clark stated that this was partly true, but stated that the GATE card was also inclusive of smaller purchases, such as shovels, chemicals, and fuel, which resulted in the additional loss of sales tax revenue.

Mr. Cannon again stated that Colquitt County was predominantly an agriculturally zoned county, which resulted in a significant loss of revenue due to agricultural tax exemptions. Mr. Cannon further stated that the school board was funded on the local, state, and federal levels; whereas the county relied mainly on property taxes, which were significantly impacted by agricultural exemptions.

Funding for construction of the new high school was briefly discussed.

As a result of the significant loss of potential revenue, Mr. Cannon stated it was imperative that the county identify ways in which to increase efficiency, reduce expenses, and fully utilize available technology.

Mr. Cannon stated that communication with state and local representatives regarding these issues was imperative.

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Mr. Griffin stated that the Solid Waste Fund was an enterprise fund, essentially meaning that if it was self sufficient.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if the proposed purchase of digital, above ground scales at the landfill would necessitate the use of a software application for management purposes.

Mr. Cannon replied that it would, stating that landfill staff still manually wrote tickets, and further stated that due to the outdated scales currently used, recalibration was often necessary in order to prevent inaccurate weight calculations.

Chairman Clark commented that above ground scales would be much more efficient.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she appreciated Mr. Griffin's efforts as Solid Waste Manager.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he appreciated the idea of a new landfill.

Mr. Cannon stated that a new landfill would save a significant amount of money in transfer costs and suggested that the proceeds from past due collection of garbage bills pay for the construction of the new landfill.

Chairman Clark thanked Mr. Griffin for his efforts in diligently searching for new ways and ideas in which the landfill could generate much needed revenue for the county.

Commissioner Herndon agreed.

Discussion ensued regarding expansion of solid waste and ways in which the commission could assist in the process.

Chairman Clark questioned if the landfill still utilized inmate labor.

Mr. Griffin replied that the landfill utilized ten inmates on a daily basis.

Chairman Clark questioned if inmates could be utilized on refuse trucks. Mr. Griffin stated that there was an issue with inmates performing a task such as a medical pullout, a service that the county provides for citizens unable to transport their garbage container to the road.

Mr. Cannon stated that this situation could possibly be rectified by using probationers instead of inmates.

At this time, Wayne Putnal, Finance Director, gave a brief overview of the proposed Solid Waste budget, noting slight increases and decreases in revenues and expenditures.

Mr. Putnal contributed the increase in salaries and wages in the Residential Collection department to the transfer of positions previously funded by the General Fund back to the Solid Waste Fund.

Mr. Putnal proceeded to review capital outlay purchases within the Solid Waste Fund.

Commissioner Strong questioned the existence of an additional employee at the landfill.

Mr. Putnal explained that this individual transferred from the Roads and Bridges department.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if the resulting vacant position at the Roads and Bridges department was occupied. Mr. Putnal replied that it was.

Commissioner Giddens asked if the proposed garbage trucks operated on diesel or gas. Mr. Griffin stated that the trucks ran on diesel, and noted that these trucks would be equipped with two steering wheels as well as being located closer to the ground, making it easier for personnel.

E-911 FUND: At this time, Mr. Cannon stated that the E-911 budget would be reviewed, and informed the board that Teresa Warburg, E-911 Director, was in attendance to answer any questions.

Mr. Cannon stated that the high rate of employee turnover at the E-911 department was a significant issue.

Mrs. Warburg agreed, stating that her department coped with the high rate of turnover, but was definitely short staffed.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the shift hours of a telecommunications operator.

Mrs. Warburg stated that the operators worked twelve hour shifts, in order to conform to shifts at the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Cannon stated that the workload of deputies and telecommunication operators was tremendous, due to the sheer size of the county and its road network. He further stated it was imperative to understand exactly what it takes to provide these services.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the number of telecommunication operators on each shift. Mrs. Warburg replied that four operators worked each shift, including one part time operator.

Mr. Putnal proceeded to review budgeted revenues and expenditures for the E-911 department.

Mr. Putnal stated that no major capital purchases were being requested in the budget.

Mr. Cannon requested that Mrs. Warburg identify her top three departmental issues.

Mrs. Warburg stated that they consisted mainly of maintaining quality personnel, and also mentioned the need for future replacement of her department's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.

Commissioner DeMott questioned the age of the existing CAD system.

Mrs. Warburg stated that the existing system was installed in 2006.

Commissioner Nagy inquired as to the major reason for such a high rate of employee turnover within the E-911 department.

Mrs. Warburg contributed this to a desire by female employees who were also mothers to acquire an "8:00-5:00" job, in order to spend more time with their children.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if there was a page within the budget book in which the commission could see a comparison of the last three years' of salary rates for all employees.

Mr. Putnal replied that this information was not included in the budget.

Mr. Cannon mentioned the 70% employee turnover rate that the county has experienced since 2009, stating that statistical information such as this was provided by the Human Resources department on a weekly basis.

Mrs. Warburg stated telecommunication operator positions required a three month training period in which it is determined if the employee will be suitable for the job. If not, Mrs. Warburg explained, the process must begin anew.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the cost to train a telecommunications operator. Mrs. Warburg stated it was approximately four months worth of salary for each position.

Commissioner Hardin questioned the tenure of existing employees within the department.

Mrs. Warburg stated that approximately 3-5 employees had been there three years or more, declaring that out of her entire staff, approximately 75% of them were new employees.

Commissioner Giddens inquired as to the starting hourly rate for new employees within the department. Mrs. Warburg replied that the starting rate was \$10.13 an hour, inclusive of eight hours of overtime each pay period.

Commissioner Hardin mentioned the rate of turnover within the department was similar to the rate of turnover at the Correctional Institute.

Commissioner Giddens questioned who determined the starting rate of pay for positions within the county. Mr. Cannon replied that this was a function of the board.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if there were any salary caps in regards to job positions within the county. Mr. Cannon replied that currently there was no pay matrix implemented, and as a result, no caps on salaries.

Mr. Cannon stated that Mrs. Warburg was one of the three lowest paid department heads within the county.

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Commissioner Nagy questioned who performed the task of GPS Addressing within the E-911 Department.

Mrs. Warburg stated this was performed by Russell Moody, who issued the address and upon doing so, uploaded the data to the E-911 system.

Mr. Cannon suggested that the board listen to a scanner in order to understand the volume of calls that the E-911 center processed on a daily basis.

The board recessed for a five minute break.

SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT: Upon return from break, Mr. Cannon gave a brief recap of the E-911 Fund and proceeded to highlight the Special Service District budget.

Mr. Cannon stated there was a proposed \$82,000.00 reduction in funding to Parks and Recreation, a slight increase in funding to Volunteer Fire Departments, and recommended a .25 millage rate increase in the Special Service District, stating that the tax digest for this district was projected to decrease 2.7% from last year.

Mr. Putnal stated that in regards to the Special Service District, \$1,735,000.00 was needed in property taxes, noting that this included \$46,000.00 of reserve funds.

Mr. Putnal stated that most of the savings within this particular budget came from the reduction in funding regarding Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Putnal proceeded to give a brief summary of expenditures within the Special Service District.

Commissioner Nagy questioned how the Economic Development Authority utilized the \$75,000.00 worth of funding granted by the county. Mr. Cannon stated that Darrell Moore, President of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Development Authority, would be in attendance at the next budget meeting to present this information to the board.

Mr. Cannon stated that the overall budget for the Special Service District was approximately \$90,000.00 less than the previous year.

Mr. Putnal reviewed revenues and expenditures within the proposed Special Service District budget with the board.

Volunteer Fire Department budget requests were discussed, with Mr. Cannon proposing that voting precincts within the county be relocated to Volunteer Fire Departments, if located within close proximity to each other.

Mr. Cannon stated there was no logic in maintaining certain voting precincts based on their usage, and suggested meeting with Wes Lewis, Elections Superintendent, and key Volunteer Fire Department personnel, in order to discuss the issue further.

Commissioner Nagy commented on the \$80,000.00 reduction in Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Cannon explained this was based on the latest “true-up” costs, and stated that meetings were currently underway in order to obtain county utilization rates for city recreational areas in which no organized sports events take place. Mr. Cannon stated that it was essential to obtain this figure, stating that without it, equitable funding could not be achieved.

Commissioner Nagy asked about the status of a new service agreement concerning Parks and Recreation. Mr. Cannon stated that the county was currently working on this issue, noting that if the county decided not to reduce funding to Parks and Recreation, the millage rate would increase even more in the Special Service District.

Mr. Cannon stated that if the board did not consider funding for the Library and Parks and Recreation as priorities, the board should review them closely.

The budget for the Economic Development Authority was briefly discussed.

The departmental budget for the Compliance Office was discussed, with Mr. Putnal stating that a new vehicle was being requested to replace an existing high mileage vehicle.

Mr. Cannon praised the performance of the new Chief Compliance Officer, Justin H. Cox, again informing the board of his intention to send Mr. Cox to a seminar regarding the grant writing process.

Mr. Putnal informed the board that he anticipates an increase, from both the county and city, in E-911 funding.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if Mrs. Warburg drove a county vehicle home. Mr. Putnal replied that she did, a Ford Focus with high fuel efficiency.

Commissioner Strong questioned the need for a new vehicle within the Compliance department.

Mr. Putnal stated that the vehicle was being requested due to the high mileage of the truck current being driven by Russell Moody, Deputy Compliance Officer.

Mr. Cannon stated that he took the vehicle originally utilized by John C. Peters and gave it to Justin Cox. Mr. Cannon noted that both Mr. Cox and Mr. Moody have county vehicles, due to the Emergency Management duties that they are both responsible for.

Mr. Cannon noted that the high mileage vehicle in the Compliance Department would be transferred to the Roads and Bridges department.

Commissioner Strong questioned if one of the vehicles being turned in by the Sheriff's Department could be utilized by the Compliance Department.

Commissioner Strong remarked that there were a lot of new vehicle purchases included in the proposed budget. Mr. Putnal replied that these vehicles are needed in order to maintain the level of services that the county provides.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if the individual employee was allowed to choose their own vehicle.

Mr. Cannon replied that they did not, that the county normally purchased a specific model of vehicle.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if the Sheriff's Department was turning in only one truck. Mr. Putnal replied yes, and stated that particular truck belonged to the Criminal Investigations division.

Discussion ensued regarding requested vehicles for the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she had recently spoken with Brad Gregory, Assistant Superintendent of Colquitt County Schools, regarding equitable funding in regards to School Resource Officers.

Mr. Cannon stated that, from the beginning of budget process, he has stated that this budget was heavy on capital expenses. He further stated that since 2009, there was approximately \$8,900,000.00 in deferred capital purchases.

Mr. Cannon stated that if this pattern of deferment continued, the county would eventually reach a point where it could not maintain its current level of service.

Commissioner Giddens voiced his disapproval regarding a School Resource Officer being allowed to drive his vehicle home to Lowndes County.

Mr. Cannon stated that Sheriff Whittington argued that this perk was necessary due to the value of the employee in question.

Mr. Cannon stated this was another valid reason for continued negotiations with the School Board regarding School Resource Officer funding.

Mr. Cannon again declared that it was essential to educate citizens regarding the fiscal hardships that the county faces.

Commissioner Giddens questioned what happened to existing patrol cars when new ones were purchased to replace them.

Mr. Cannon explained that these vehicles were declared as surplus to the county's needs and transported to auction.

Commissioner Giddens stated that the Sheriff's Department was requesting two new vehicles for the SRO division, and questioned why they couldn't utilize an unused patrol vehicle within the department's existing fleet.

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Mr. Cannon stated that they could, but with the high mileage that these particular vehicles possess, further stated that it would more than likely be in the shop for maintenance the majority of the time.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the amount of mileage that a School Resource Officer actually drives.

Commissioner Nagy stated that it was extensive, due to out of town school sports events and activities.

Mr. Cannon stated that the county absorbed most of the costs for School Resource Officers, and declared that the county had just recently raised this particular argument with the School Board. He further stated that the School Board's current reimbursement included only personnel costs, and did not include equipment, fuel, and other associated costs.

Commissioner Nagy requested that Mr. Cannon explain the new agreement concerning School Resource Officers with the board.

Mr. Cannon stated that previously, the School Board only reimbursed 30% of SRO personnel costs, and it had since been increased to 50%. In addition, Mr. Cannon explained that for any extra-curricular activity, the School Board now paid 100% of the costs, as opposed to the previous rate of 60%.

Mr. Putnal briefly discussed possible changes to sports regions within the state of Georgia that could possible necessitate even more travel for School Resource Officers.

Commissioner Strong stated that he understood all of the issues discussed but still reverted back to one major fact, which was that the county did not possess the resources to fund all of the requests included in the proposed budget.

Commissioner Strong further stated that his concern was that the average citizen was struggling, and couldn't foresee increasing that burden.

Commissioner Strong stated that the board must continue to look at ways to decrease the overall size of the budget.

Again, Mr. Cannon mentioned the extensive employee turnover that the county faces and stated that overtime at the prison alone was budgeted at \$100,000.00.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the percentage of the budget spent on employees and personnel. Mr. Putnal replied that this comprised approximately 68% of the total budget.

Commissioner Giddens stated his concern regarding how the county could operate on a budget that was mostly comprised of personnel costs.

Mr. Cannon stated that it requires personnel and resources to perform the services that the county provides.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the number of vacant offices in the County Annex building.

Mr. Cannon replied that all offices were occupied.

Commissioner Hardin stated that the county could not continue to absorb all of the associated costs regarding School Resource Officers.

Mr. Cannon stated that this issue necessitated board member to board member discussion.

Mr. Cannon stated that there were options to consider in order to decrease the overall size of the budget, but those deferred requests would be back the following year.

Mr. Cannon also stated that he sympathized with the commission, stating that it was difficult to increase the millage rate, but when the continued provision of services required it, it was necessary.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he wasn't speaking in opposition to the COLA, but stated that lower level employees would get less than your top level employees, thus increasing the salary gap between these individuals.

Discussion ensued regarding decreasing the size of the budget and the possibility of rolling back millage rates in order to eliminate the millage rate discrepancy.

Commissioner Giddens mentioned that lower level employees needed an increase more than higher paid employees.

Commissioner Hardin stated the need for salary caps on positions, stating that between 1998 and 2007, there was a 19.5% increase in county employee salaries. Commissioner Hardin stated that this further widened the salary gap between comparable positions.

Mr. Cannon stated that the Social Security Administration had issued COLA raises yearly with the exception of only two years, thus emphasizing the importance of a COLA increase for county employees. Mr. Cannon further stated that he would prefer to keep the COLA due to the importance of retaining quality employees.

Discussion ensued regarding how to best apply the COLA increase, particulars regarding the Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution retirement plans, and the benefit package that the county currently offers its employees.

Mr. Cannon noted that, with the high rate of employee turnover, more and more employees were coming off of the Defined Benefit retirement plan.

Mr. Cannon stated that the recent implementation of the new annual leave system, combined with the nicotine surcharge and Defined Contribution plan, would result in significantly decreased personnel costs.

Commissioner Hardin stated that it was hard to predict the costs of healthcare.

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Mr. Cannon stated that half the budget consisted of state mandated costs and again stressed the importance of communicating with state representatives and citizens concerning the important of the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) referendum.

Commissioner Nagy stated that looking ahead, it was imperative to communicate with state representatives and noted that, while campaigning for his commission seat, he noticed that half of his constituents worked outside of Colquitt County.

Commissioner Nagy stressed the importance of advertising Colquitt County as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Commissioner Giddens remarked that anytime an exemption was granted, someone had to compensate for the loss of revenue.

Mr. Cannon stated that his job as County Administrator was the efficient management of the daily operations of the county. He further stated that he required assistance from the commission in order to effectively communicate with state representatives and other outside entities regarding important issues.

Commissioner Giddens again stated his belief that the county could not continue to operate efficiently when 68% of the overall county budget was devoted to personnel costs.

Mr. Cannon stated that he anticipated additional revenue from future solid waste expansion.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the amount budgeted for fuel as compared to last year.

Mr. Putnal replied that budgeted amounts were based on a cost calculation of \$3.00 per gallon.

Commissioner Hardin suggested that the board come back, review the budget books page by page, and earnestly endeavor to decrease the size of the overall budget.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he liked the idea of granting raises if the county was able to do so, and suggested researching different ways in which to apply the COLA increase.

Mr. Cannon noted that department heads did not receive merit increases last year.

Commissioner DeMott stated that while tellers were the lowest paid employees at the bank, they worked extremely hard and greeted the most people. However, Commissioner DeMott further stated that you must retain management and key leaders, as they can easily go elsewhere.

Commissioner DeMott stated his belief that, in the long run, the COLA could be effective as long as merit increases were also implemented, stating that although key personnel may earn a higher salary, they must be retained as well.

Mr. Putnal stated that the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) amounted to approximately \$245,000.00 in the General Fund and an additional \$50,000.00 - \$60,000.00 in other funds.

Commissioner Hardin stated those figures were substantial when the resources did not exist to grant them.

Commissioner DeMott stated that it was essential that current management take decisive action regarding adequate performance of personnel.

Commissioner Hardin stated that evaluation of employees had not always been performed.

Mr. Cannon stated that he recently implemented employee evaluations, which in turn provided the necessary documentation regarding employees deserving of a merit increase.

Mr. Cannon reviewed a list of key, upcoming dates with the board and reminded them of the next scheduled budget meeting on Thursday, May 21, at 5:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Commissioner DeMott made the motion at 7:31 p.m. to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (An affidavit, as required by Georgia Law, was executed by all Board members present stating under oath that the subject matter of the closed meeting was devoted to the matters within the exception provided by law and identified the specific relevant exception as provided by law. The affidavit is hereby made a portion of the minutes by reference thereto.)

REGULAR SESSION: Commissioner Giddens made the motion at 7:51 p.m. to reconvene into regular session. Commissioner Hardin made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry R. Clark
Chairman

Melissa Lawson
County Clerk

Approved:

AFFIDAVIT

This is to certify that the Colquitt County Board of Commissioners held an Executive Session Meeting (closed meeting) on May 19, 2015, at 1:31 o'clock a.m./p.m. The majority of the quorum present voted in the open meeting to go into Executive Session (closed meeting). The subject matter discussed was applicable under the following code section(s):

O.C.G.A. 50-14-2(1) – Consultation with an attorney regarding pending or potential legal action.

O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(4) – Discussion of future acquisition of real estate. (Notice was given as required and minutes taken.)

O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(6) – Discussion of personnel matters.

I further certify that the subject matter of the Executive Session (closed meeting) was devoted to matters within the exception provided by law and the above checked identifies the specific relevant exception.

This 19th day of May, 2015.

Terry Clark
Terry Clark, Chairman

Winfred Giddens
Winfred Giddens, Commissioner

Donna Herndon
Donna Herndon, Commissioner

Johnny Hardin
Johnny Hardin, Commissioner

Luke Strong
Luke Strong, Commissioner

Marc DeMott
Marc DeMott, Commissioner

Paul Nagy
Paul Nagy, Commissioner

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 19th day of May, 2015.

Melissa Gause
County Clerk or Notary Public
My Commission Expires: _____

