

MINUTES
SIXTH BUDGET MEETING OF THE
COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016
THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2015
5:00 o'clock p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: The sixth 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, Donna Herndon, Paul Nagy, Johnny Hardin, Chairman Terry R. Clark, County Administrator Chas Cannon, Finance Director Wayne Putnal, and County Clerk Melissa Lawson.

ABSENT: Commissioner Marc DeMott.

ALSO PRESENT: Solid Waste Manager Stacy Griffin, Captain Julius Cox, Road Superintendent Stanley Kirksey, Chief Compliance Officer Justin H. Cox, Shop Superintendent Mac Lawson, and County Extension Coordinator Jeremy Kichler.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016 BUDGET CONTINUED: Mr. Cannon reviewed a list of proposed options to consider regarding the proposed 2015 – 2016 budget.

In regards to millage rates, Mr. Cannon stated that currently the millage rate was set to decrease in the Incorporated areas by .276 and increase in the Unincorporated areas by 1.235. Mr. Cannon explained that this would correct the discrepancy regarding Gross M&O millage rates in these areas.

At this time, Mr. Cannon reviewed additional options with the board, including utilization of reserve funds and the possible elimination of Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and merit increases. Mr. Cannon noted that he did not recommend the elimination of employee pay increases.

Mr. Cannon explained that an update regarding the potential sale of county property would be provided by Lester Castellow, County Attorney, during an upcoming work session.

Mr. Cannon stated that during a review of financial statements provided by the Health Department, the decision was made to reduce their funding by \$20,000.00. Mr. Cannon explained that this decision was due to a healthy reserve balance maintained by the Health Department.

Mr. Cannon explained that \$100,000.00 in additional funding was being proposed to the Library, in exchange for the Library funding any proposed changes or upgrades as a result of the upcoming energy audit.

Mr. Cannon discussed a proposed salary increase for a registered nurse at the county prison. Mr. Cannon explained that this individual would be obtaining a nurse practitioner license at the end of June, and as a result, Warden Billy Howell was proposing a \$25,000.00 increase.

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Mr. Cannon stated that negotiations with Colquitt Regional Medical Center regarding the provision of healthcare at the jail and prison would be inclusive of this individual becoming an employee of the hospital itself, meaning that the county would not absorb the increase in salary permanently.

A grant writing seminar attended by Justin H. Cox, Chief Compliance Officer, was briefly discussed.

Mr. Cannon stated that significant attendance at the seminar proved that other counties and municipalities were aggressively pursuing grant funds as a method of reducing expenditures in the area of public safety.

Mr. Cannon briefly discussed the Sunset Airport, which is operated by the Airport Authority but owned by the county. Mr. Cannon suggested further research into ways to generate revenue from this county owned resource.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the amount of additional funding granted to the Library.

Mr. Cannon stated that the original reduction was significant, and stated he felt it was equitable to grant the funding in lieu of the Library financing upgrades due to the upcoming energy audit.

Commissioner Herndon mentioned donations as a potential revenue source for the Library.

Mr. Cannon reviewed recent modifications and eliminations to requested capital purchases over \$5,000.00.

Mr. Putnal informed the board that the mini-excavator package and backhoe package were added to a list of items to be funded from the potential sale of county property.

Commissioner Giddens voiced his concern regarding an excavator belonging to the Roads and Bridges department sitting idle on Cool Springs Road for an extended period of time. Stan Kirksey, Road Superintendent, stated that he would research the matter.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the amount of capital purchases that were eliminated before the budget was presented to the board. Mr. Putnal replied over \$300,000.00, and reminded the board that over \$1,200,000.00 in capital purchases were shifted to be funded by SPLOST proceeds.

Commissioner Herndon questioned why the equipment needed to facilitate the transition away from inmate labor was still included in the budget.

Mr. Cannon stated that the board had not made a final decision regarding this matter, and suggested further consideration by the board, based on the recommendations from Mr. Kirksey.

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Commissioner Giddens requested Commissioner Nagy's opinion regarding the price of a tactical rifle, and questioned how often a weapon such as this was utilized by the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Herndon questioned the current amount of the overall budget.

School Resource Officers were discussed in detail, with Mr. Cannon explaining that the Board of Education agreed to purchase one of the suggested two new vehicles for the School Resource Officers.

Commissioner Giddens questioned why an existing, unused vehicle in the Sheriff's Department fleet could not be used for this purpose.

Mac Lawson, Shop Superintendent, explained that most vehicles within the Sheriff's Department fleet had very high mileage.

Commissioner Giddens suggested using the newly purchased vehicle for out of town needs and a recycled vehicle for in town travel, declaring that the board needed to decrease the overall size of the budget.

Captain Cox stated that out of town trips often necessitated more than one School Resource Officer, thus the need for reliable vehicles.

The revised cost agreement with the Board of Education regarding School Resource Officers was thoroughly discussed.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the utilization of School Resource Officers during summer break.

Captain Cox explained that these individuals were utilized by the Sheriff's Department during this time, stating this grants a much needed opportunity to rotate personnel.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the daily work hours of a School Resource Officer.

Captain Cox reminded the board that the Sheriff's Department was always functioning, and never ceased to operate.

Mr. Cannon reviewed the new agreement with the Board of Education regarding reimbursement and payment for School Resource Officers, stating that it would take effect July 1.

The Intergovernmental Jail Housing Agreement between Colquitt County and the City of Moultrie was briefly discussed.

Mr. Cannon discussed a previous meeting with Mike Scott, City Manager, regarding the Parks and Recreation program and the Intergovernmental Jail Housing Agreement.

The Sunset Airport was discussed at length, with Mr. Cannon proposing to contact the Airport Authority to obtain additional information.

Commissioner Nagy stated that while serving on the Grand Jury, the Airport Authority presented statistical information in regards to their operation.

In an effort to combat lost time and productivity from the transportation of inmates, Commissioner Giddens suggested that prison personnel fax work orders to the Roads and Bridges department.

Mr. Cannon stated that options such as this must be explored in order to reduce the logistical loss of time due to the transportation of inmates.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if temporary labor costs were transferred to be funded through proceeds from the sale of county property. Mr. Cannon replied that they were not, only the capital related purchases.

Commissioner Giddens stated that an employee of the Sheriff's Department should not be allowed to drive a county vehicle to his residence in Lowndes County, declaring that this was an unnecessary and unfair expense.

Commissioner Nagy stated that his assistant lived in Lowndes County, and was responsible for providing his own means of transportation back and forth to work.

Captain Cox remarked that these were two different scenarios, and stated that he had an issue with singling out one individual employee.

Commissioner Giddens declared that he was in favor of no county vehicle leaving the county, and questioned the number of deputies that live outside of Colquitt County.

Captain Cox stated that the Sheriff's Department strove to acquire personnel that they could trust to perform the job efficiently and ethically.

Commissioner Giddens stated that an individual should realize the responsibilities and potential dangers that a job entailed before accepting the position.

Commissioner Giddens remarked that the county had several lower paid employees that were required to furnish their own means of transportation to work.

Discussion ensued regarding requested trucks for the Drug Enforcement division.

Captain Cox explained that two drug agents were currently driving seized vehicles, and further explained that a vehicle previously furnished by the Federal Bureau of Investigation was no longer available for use.

Budgeted line items in the various departmental budgets were briefly discussed.

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Mr. Cannon stated that the overall budget was driven by public safety, public works, and the recommended Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for employees.

Commissioner Giddens declared his opinion that employees deserved a raise but stated that he was not in favor of a 3% COLA to be granted across the board.

Commissioner Giddens stated that he was in favor of salary caps for department head positions.

Mr. Cannon stated that superior performing employees would have the potential for merit increases, further stating that the implementation of merit increases would assist with the recruitment and retention of quality employees.

Commissioner Giddens remarked that at his previous place of employment, salary caps existed for personnel, and further remarked that an employee should be compensated an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

Job openings at the Roads and Bridges department were discussed.

Commissioner Nagy questioned how many law enforcement personnel were lost to turn over during the past year. Captain Cox replied approximately twenty employees.

Entry level pay for law enforcement personnel was briefly discussed.

Commissioner Giddens remarked that several employees, especially those in positions that entail legal responsibilities, do not make more than \$10.00 per hour.

Mr. Cannon presented statistical information regarding comparable law enforcement positions in Tift and Colquitt Counties, stating that an entry level position in Tift County was compensated at a significantly higher rate than a tenured position in Colquitt County.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he would like to see the board thoroughly review salaries before implementing the cost of living increase.

Captain Cox stated that a COLA was simply a cost of living adjustment, and was not comparable to the implementation of a pay matrix system.

Commissioner Herndon stated that budget meetings were not the appropriate time to be presented with new proposals.

Chairman Clark stated that budget meetings were the ideal time to be presented with new ideas, so that funding could be thoroughly discussed.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she would rather grant employee raises than purchase new equipment. Mr. Cannon stated that it was imperative that the board discover a way to accomplish both.

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Commissioner Nagy stated that he was in favor of granting raises but would rather see Mr. Cannon facilitate the implementation of a pay matrix system during the upcoming year.

Commissioner Hardin reminded all present that upon implementation of the COLA increase, funding must also be obtained to fund these higher salaries the next fiscal year as well.

Commissioner Giddens again declared that he would not support a 3% COLA increase across the board, but would support merit increases.

Chairman Clark stated that he was in favor of the 3% COLA across the board, stating that the board has delayed the increase for far too long.

Mr. Cannon urged the board to consider the equipment and personnel that is necessary to run the county, and also stated it was imperative to communicate these issues to the citizens of Colquitt County.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the utilization of overtime at the Sheriff's Department.

Captain Cox explained that it takes an equivalent amount of personnel to perform the duties required, again stating that law enforcement was a constant operation.

Commissioner Nagy stated that department heads are hired to do a job and must be trusted to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she has observed significant improvements in county operations.

Commissioner Hardin discussed the costs included in the budget in order to facilitate the transition away from the reliance on inmate labor, stating that there were many factors to consider when spending such significant amounts of taxpayer funds.

Commissioner Herndon questioned if the county was mandated by law to furnish School Resource Officers. Mr. Cannon replied that the county was not mandated to provide these officers.

Commissioner Hardin stated that Mr. Cannon was proceeding in the right direction with further negotiations with the Board of Education concerning School Resource Officers.

Captain Cox remarked that this was a safety issue concerning the students of Colquitt County.

At this time, Mr. Cannon presented annual revenue figures for the Solid Waste department, and proceeded to present statistical data regarding the construction of a new county landfill.

Mr. Cannon cited an annual savings of \$600,000.00 in solid waste transfer costs upon construction of a new landfill.

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Mr. Cannon presented a map of the potential landfill, citing challenges that must be faced in order to accomplish construction of the landfill, including permits and the purchase of equipment.

Mr. Cannon stated that it was his intention to pay for the majority of construction of the new landfill with cash on hand.

Mr. Cannon discussed plans to expand solid waste services in the county, beginning with the new light commercial service beginning July 1.

Mr. Cannon briefly discussed the feasibility study and its subsequent costs with the board, as well as the board's preferred method of payment for the study.

Mr. Cannon stated that on Thursday, June 25, a meeting would be held to report findings concerning the landfill and to educate the board on the process for permitting the landfill.

Mr. Cannon stated that Stacy Griffin, Solid Waste Manager, worked diligently to drive down expenses and increase revenues within the solid waste fund.

Mr. Cannon stated that a successful landfill would be a much needed revenue stream for the county.

Commissioner Giddens questioned when repairs to a roof leak and HVAC system at the Courthouse would be completed.

Commissioner Giddens also declared that a records repository was badly needed, and stated that funds for this were included on a former 2002 SPLOST referendum.

Mr. Cannon stated these issues were in the process of being resolved.

Mr. Cannon presented a list of key, upcoming dates with the board.

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry R. Clark
Chairman

Melissa Lawson
County Clerk

Approved:
