

MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016 BUDGET
COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2015
6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: The Public Hearing for the proposed Fiscal Year 2015 – 2016 budget was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Terry R. Clark. The purpose of the public hearing was to obtain public comments regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2015 – 2016 budget. The meeting was duly called and advertised.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Preston Jimmerson voiced his concern regarding the proposed reduction in funding to the Parks and Recreation program. As an employee of Moss Farms Diving, he stated that the reduction in funding would directly impact the ability of Moss Farms Diving to provide the best diving facility in Moultrie. He urged the board to consider the youth in Colquitt County that would be affected as a result of the proposed reduction in funding to the Parks and Recreation program.

At this time, Commissioner Herndon stated that she desired for all county citizens to understand the financial obstacles that the county faces in order to meet its obligations to provide services to the citizens of Colquitt County.

Commissioner Herndon thanked all those in attendance, but stated that she wished for even more to attend in order to better understand the specifics of the county budget process.

At this time, Mr. Cannon presented a sequential list of county budget priorities. Mr. Cannon stated that it was the county's intent to use taxpayer funds conservatively and to research ways in which to generate additional sources of revenue.

Mr. Cannon presented data consisting of original budget request figures in comparison to proposed budget request figures.

Mr. Cannon presented proposed millage rate totals, beginning with a .493 decrease in the Incorporated areas and a 1.018 increase in the Unincorporated areas.

Mr. Cannon presented the impacts of the millage rate proposals on the average residential unit and average non-homesteaded unit in Colquitt County. Mr. Cannon also noted that House Bill 170, also known as the Transportation Bill, would have more of an annual impact on taxpayers than the proposed changes to millage rates within the county.

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Mr. Cannon presented overall highlights of the proposed budget, stating that it was heavy on capital purchases, included a 3% Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) for county employees, and utilized \$300,000.00 of reserve funds. Mr. Cannon stated that, if granted, the COLA would be the first raise granted for county employees in eight years.

Mr. Cannon presented revenues and expenditures contained in the proposed budget, stating that the county has been faced with declining revenues in nearly all categories.

Mr. Cannon presented a historical trend of revenues within the General Fund, with only two out of the last six years showing an increase in revenues.

Mr. Cannon stated that several factors impact the county budget, including extensive agricultural exemptions that restrict property tax revenue, as well as the fact that the county receives no Local Option Sales Tax proceeds. He further stated that these factors combined total \$6,400,000.00 in revenues that the county never receives, almost more than the county's public safety and public works budgets combined.

Mr. Cannon continued with his presentation, emphasizing that the proposed budget was heavy on capital purchases due to the continued deferment of these items.

Mr. Cannon presented statistical work order data for the Roads and Bridges and E-911 departments, respectively.

Mr. Cannon stated that the Social Security Administration granted eight COLA's during recent years, while the county granted none during this same period.

Mr. Cannon presented millage rate comparisons between Colquitt County and surrounding counties, stating that Colquitt County has one of the lowest millage rates in the area.

Mr. Cannon stated that approximately 60% of the overall budget consisted of personnel costs, but iterated that the county does not generate a product, but rather exists to provide services to the citizens of the county. These services require personnel and equipment.

Mr. Cannon stated that the commission would continue to work diligently to refine the budget, with the proposed budget adoption date being June 18, 2015.

At this time, Mr. Cannon opened the floor for questions or comments.

Commissioner Nagy asked Mr. Cannon to review the comparative millage rate data once again, stressing the fact that Colquitt County received no Local Option Sales Tax proceeds.

At this time, Mike Boyd questioned if the budget numbers presented for law enforcement were inclusive of all law departments. He further questioned what the budget amounts would be for each separate law enforcement division.

Mr. Boyd noted an increase in the overall law enforcement budget from last year, and asked if it was mainly due to capital purchases. Mr. Cannon replied that it was.

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There being no further comments or questions from the public, the public hearing was closed at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry R. Clark
Chairman

Melissa Lawson
County Clerk

Approved:
