

## JULY 9, 2015 – BUDGET HEARING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a budget hearing on Thursday, July 9, 2015, at 9:00 a.m., at the Walton County Courthouse in DeFuniak Springs.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Bill Imfeld, Chairman; Commissioner Sara Comander, Vice-Chairman; Commissioner W.N. “Bill” Chapman; Commissioner Cecilia Jones; and Commissioner Cindy Meadows. Mr. Larry Jones, County Administrator; Mr. Stan Sunday, Deputy County Administrator; Ms. Dede Hinote, Deputy County Administrator; and Mr. Mark Davis, County Attorney, were also present.

Chairman Imfeld called the meeting to order to discuss the proposed budget for FY 2015-2016.

Ms. Melissa Thomason, Finance Director, discussed the proposed budget and stated that there is a continued upward growth in the economy with an increase in taxable value of 11.9% over last year. She stated that the draft budget assumes no change in the current millage rate of 3.6363 and North Walton Mosquito Control District (NWMCD) of 0.4912. She explained that a proposed millage rate would need to be set, and it could be lowered but not increased after it has been set. Notable items, TIF funding, stormwater, infrastructure, employee raises, increases/decreases per department as presented, health insurance premiums, and a cost allocation plan were discussed. She explained that next year there is a possible mandatory requirement for replacement of equipment for the Supervisor of Elections office, which would total approximately \$500,000. They are looking into options for leasing and storage of the equipment. She stated that technology needs will also change next year and staff is working diligently to budget for these costs. She suggested looking at restructuring the Planning

Department fees and staff will continue to seek grant opportunities. RESTORE Act funds have not been included in the proposed budget.

Commissioner Meadows questioned the amount of outstanding code fines and felt that more efforts are needed to collect those fines. Ms. Thomason was not aware of the amount. Attorney Mark Davis, County Attorney, explained that they have been working on collection strategies. Commissioner Meadows questioned the amount that the millage rate would have to be increased to total \$1 million. Ms. Thomason answered approximately 0.08 mills.

Commissioner Meadows felt that the proposed budget is a good basic budget but there are needs such as paving options, stormwater management, additional multi-use paths, bridge repairs, overlay on CR 30A, sidewalks, and centralized filing for the Planning Department that need to be addressed as well. She felt that the proposed budget does not address any of the severe infrastructure needs and the need to develop a model to address the needs and not wait for State grants or RESTORE Act funds. She briefly discussed the need for an additional FTE in the Planning Department for an Environmental Planner, RESTORE Act funds should be kept in a separate account, and all other funds need to be listed and determine how that funding will be provided (i.e. prop share).

Commissioner Chapman discussed TIF funding on CR 30A, stormwater management concerns, and the need for a succession plan in Fire Rescue. He questioned the 14% increase as requested by the TDC and the need for 8 more employees. Mr. Jim Bagby, TDC Executive Director, explained that staff has decreased since 2007 and they are trying to add those employees back. He discussed the contribution of services/funding that the TDC provides for projects and the need for a Public Relations Department. Commissioner Chapman felt that more

Code Enforcement Officers are needed. Mr. Bagby explained that they have included seasonal employees in their budget.

Commissioner Comander expressed the need to fix the issues before asking more people to come to our area without the improvements. She also expressed the need for more Code Enforcement Officers and to decrease the bed taxes. She briefly discussed the need for money at the Landfill, infrastructure needs, and an additional employee in the County Attorney's office to address public records requests. Attorney Davis explained that they are reviewing software solutions that should help the process instead of adding more staff to their department.

Commissioner Jones recommended making a schedule for replacing equipment that are constantly needing repairs. She also felt that more coordination and communication in the TDC is necessary rather than adding more employees. She felt that more land should be bought with the TDC funds. Mr. Bagby explained that he consulted with staff to determine that more employees are indeed needed. He felt that by bringing services in-house money could be saved and services improved.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the need to hold another budget hearing at the South Walton Annex before a tentative millage rate is set, the need for DOT and grant programs, Landfill deterioration and needs for improvement, effectiveness of the EDA, COLA percentages, and the need for evaluation processes for merit raises.

Chairman Imfeld asked for public comment.

Mr. Bob Hudson felt that a process change is needed for the budget and clear direction is needed for staff. He discussed the population demographics and need to have a plan to support growth in our County. He also discussed the Preservation Fund balance, Sheriff's Office vehicles, TDC requests, TIF funding, and lowering the bed tax rate.

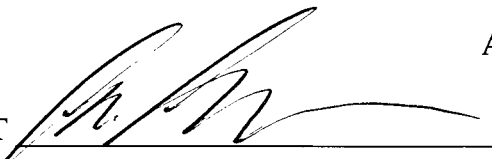
Major Joe Preston explained the need for new vehicles for the Sheriff's Office and their efforts to develop and be creative by taking on the Jail and negotiations with the Department of Corrections.


Mr. Bagby explained that the shoulder season attendance has doubled within the last 5-10 years over the core season. He explained that when they increase visitors it is to grow tourism year-round, not within the core season.

Mr. Todd Torgeson explained that the increase to the health insurance premiums was due to our loss ratio.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the direction for staff to take and information to present at the July 14, 2015 budget hearing.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m. and will be continued at the July 14, 2015 meeting at 2:00 p.m.

ATTEST   
Alex Alford, Clerk of Courts  
and County Comptroller

APPROVED   
Bill Imfeld, Chairman