

SEPTEMBER 11, 2006 – BUDGET HEARING

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Budget Hearing on Monday, September 11, 2006, at 5:05 p.m. at the South Walton Courthouse Annex.

The following Board members were present: Chairman, Scott Brannon, Vice-Chairman, Kenneth Pridgen, Commissioner Larry Jones, Commissioner Cindy Meadows, and Commissioner Rosier Cuchens. Mr. Ronnie Bell, County Administrator, Mr. David Hallman, County Attorney, and Ms. Martha Ingle, Clerk of Courts, were also present.

Commissioner Cuchens led with prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

Chairman Brannon called to order the advertised budget hearing to adopt the tentative millage and budget for FY 2006-07 and read the following statement into the record:

“The proposed county-wide millage rate is 4.2600 mills plus voted debt service of 0.0155 mills totaling 4.2755 mills, and 0.5982 mills for the North Walton Mosquito Control District. In aggregate, this is a 22.45% increase over the Rolled Back Rate. The Rolled Back Rate is the rate that would essentially generate the same ad valorem tax revenues as last year. The 4.2755 mills (which applied to the General, County Transportation, Fine and Forfeiture, and Debt Service Funds) is lower than the fiscal year 2005-2006 rate, which was 4.3302 mills. The 0.5982 millage rate for the North Walton Mosquito Control District is the same as the fiscal year 2005-2006 rate.”

Mr. Bill Imfeld, Walton County Finance Director, described the budget process. He further explained that the purpose of this meeting was to adopt a *tentative* millage rate and budget. The final budget hearing will be held on September 25. He informed the Board that the budget could be further reduced, but once it is cut, it can not be increased.

Chairman Brannon informed the citizens that this meeting was not held to dispute assessed property values. He explained that the appropriate forum to dispute a discrepancy would be to file a petition to be heard by the Value Adjustment Board on October 25 and 26. The deadline to submit a VAB petition to the Walton County Clerk of Court's Office is Wednesday, September 13, 2006.

The floor was opened for public comments. The following citizens voiced public comments regarding the proposed budget increase: Mr. Rick Helfand, Mr. David Kramer, Ms. Diane Myer, and Mr. Lane Rees.

Ms. Bonnie McQuiston, President of the Walton County Tax Payer's Association read a prepared statement into the record. She implored the Board to reduce the proposed 22.54% increase in the budget.

Mr. Bob Hudson, also with the Tax Payer's Association, presented a power-point presentation titled "The WCTA study of the Proposed Walton County Budget." A copy of the presentation was entered into the record.

The public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

The Board ensued discussion regarding the effects of a ¼ or ½ mill reduction in the budget.

Commissioner Meadows spoke of a few different issues she would like to discuss with the delegation. She was in support of sending a message to the state legislature urging them to

review the concept of placing a cap on the increase on properties evaluation for second homes and investment properties. Mr. Bell stated that he would discuss the issues with the lobbyist when they meet to generate the county's legislative agenda for the upcoming year.

Chairman Brannon and Commissioner Jones expressed additional comments.

Motion by Commissioner Jones to adopt a tentative millage rate of 4.0600, a ¼ mill reduction over last year's rate. Chairman Brannon stepped down and seconded the motion.

Each commissioner made final comments. Commissioner Meadows spoke in support of considering the millage rate by at least ½ mill. Commissioner Brannon reiterated that the Board was adopting a *tentative* millage rate and budget. He stated that Mr. Imfeld could further review the budget to determine the impacts of a ½ mill reduction and present the findings at the final budget hearing. Commissioner Pridgen concurred with the comments made by Commissioner Brannon in regards to directing staff to re-examine the budget. The general consensus of the Board was to direct the Finance Department to review opportunities to further reduce the budget.

Commissioner Pridgen, acting as Chair, called for a vote for the motion on the floor. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Jones Aye, Brannon Aye, Cuchens Aye, Pridgen Aye, and Meadows Aye.

Chairman Brannon read the following statement into the record:

“The proposed county-wide millage rate is 4.0600 mills plus voted debt service of 0.0155 mills totaling 4.0755 mills, and 0.5982 mills for the North Walton Mosquito Control District. In aggregate, this is a 16.84% increase over the Rolled Back Rate. The Rolled Back Rate is the rate that would essentially generate the same ad valorem tax revenues as last year. The 4.0755 mills (which is applied to the General, county Transportation, Fine and Forfeiture, and Debt

Service Funds) is lower than the fiscal year 2005-2006 rate, which was 4.3302 mills. The 0.5982 millage rate for the North Walton Mosquito Control District is the same as the fiscal year 2005-2006 rate. The total tentative budget is \$139,018,602, of which the operating budget is \$126,746,602.”

Motion by Commissioner Pridgen, second by Commissioner Cuchens, to adopt the tentative budget for FY 2006-2007. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Jones Aye, Brannon Aye, Cuchens Aye, Pridgen Aye, and Meadows Aye.

The final budget hearing is scheduled for September 25, 2006, at 5:05 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse in DeFuniak Springs

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Brannon, Chairman

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Martha Ingle, Clerk of Court