



MINUTES

Board of County Commissioners

Tuesday, July 27, 2021 @ 1:00 PM

South Walton Annex Board Room

Budget Hearing

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Chairman Trey Nick, Commissioner Michael Barker, Commissioner Boots McCormick, Commissioner Danny Glidewell, and Commissioner Tony Anderson

STAFF PRESENT: Clay Adkinson, Interim County Attorney and Larry Jones, County Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nick called the meeting to order.

OMB/FINANCE

1. Continued Budget Workshop for FY 22

Ms. Melissa Thomason, Finance Director, reviewed the budget changes approved at the last meeting to include moving all non-exempt employees to the step table, then increase them 2 steps, allocate a 5% increase for exempt employees and move starting salaries to \$13.00 per hour. This increases the total cost by \$1.03 million to non-supporting funds.

Both Escambia County and Okaloosa County agreed to the Medical Examiner's request for a funding increase. Ms. Thomason proceeded with funding the additional \$139,624.00 for a total of \$209,818.00.

Four FTE's and salary increases were added to the Planning Department for a total increase of \$480,000.00.

Ms. Thomason stated after the additions were added into the budget there was a remaining \$426,786.00 to allocate. She said the 3rd floor courthouse project came in over budget and would come back before the board. The lowest bid is \$225,000.00 over the amount budgeted. The Freeport complex parking lot is anticipated to cost

\$320,000.00 over budget. That could possibly be funded from excess revenues in this current year. With the parking lot factored in there is a remaining balance of \$16,786.00.

Ms. Thomason reviewed the Planning Department's request for 2 vehicles for their new positions. She also stated there are 2 vehicles in the current year's budget that have not been purchased at this time. Mr. Mac Carpenter, Planning and Development Director, stated he was waiting to purchase electric trucks, but would like to proceed with the purchase of those 2 vehicles this year and include funding for new staff in next year's budget as well. Mr. Larry Jones, County Administrator, recommended the board consider allowing the purchase of the 2 new vehicles when the new positions are filled. Ms. Thomason stated it could be months to get a new vehicle due to the market.

Ms. Thomason stated the Sheriff's Office is pulling their request of \$1.5 million for personnel but has an alternate request. Chief Clark, Walton County Sheriff's Department, stated they have pulled the \$1.5 million but asked the board to approve funding for pay increases in the amount of 5-6% which totals approximately \$1 million. Ms. Thomason stated revenues are estimated to hold steady but could possibly decrease and stated there is no room to increase the Sheriff's funding. Commissioner Glidewell stated they are all county employees and if there is any way the sheriff's employees should get the same amount of increase as board employees. Ms. Thomason stated she would keep working the numbers to see if we can help them.

Mr. Bob Brooke spoke about the Sheriff's budget and the number of positions they are running short on. He addressed the need for additional positions and commented on the difficulties of hiring or retaining staff. The commissioners commented on the difficulties of serving in law enforcement. In addition, the retirement is no longer the same. Chief Clark stated the problem in retaining people is state-wide. Commissioner Glidewell stated he has been working with Northwest Florida Schools and other training facilities in an attempt to locate qualified people.

Ms. Thomason spoke about the Discretionary Contribution request: Tivoli Historical Society - \$25,000.00 and Matrix - \$45,000.00. She maintained the same level as prior years and recommended not adding any new agencies due to the lack of funds. Commissioner Glidewell questioned if there is any CARES funds. Ms. Thomason stated if they have a plan that fits in the criteria, they will be allowed to submit a request.

Ms. Thomason presented the funding request from the Library for 1.5 FTE's. Capital funding was provided, but not the FTE's which included a Technology Manager and a PT Outreach Clerk.

Ms. Katy Cerise spoke about the needs and the time delays it takes for getting assistance from other county staff. Commissioner Glidewell suggested hiring a technology person, but sharing the position county wide and asked if she is willing to share the position. She stated she would. He asked for time to discuss this issue further.

Ms. Thomason stated the County Extension Office requested 1 FTE for a Family and Consumer Science Agent. The University of Florida will pay the benefits for the position.

The cost would be approximately \$12,000.00 a year. After speaking with Mr. Mike Goodchild there is a possibility that amount can be absorbed into his budget without increasing the overall budget. She stated they will search the county to check for an available vehicle.

Emergency Management requested 1 FTE in the amount of \$75,000.00 Mr. Jeff Goldberg explained the position and the need to help find additional grant funding. He stated they have expanded their outreach which has been difficult during COVID. After further discussion Commissioner Glidewell asked Ms. Thomason to make a placeholder for this position. The consensus was that if funding can be found then it can move forward.

After review of the Mosquito Control budget Ms. Thomason expressed the need to make some shifts in the budget line items to allow for a FT position and to reallocate the seasonal positions. The commissioners agreed to add the position contingent upon a budgetary plan to operate within the current millage.

Commissioner McCormick questioned funding for the Grady Brown project. Ms. Thomason stated she is working on funding sources. She stated the \$4 million set aside for the S.W. TIF projects can be funded from the new stimulus funds then shift some TIF monies to Grady Brown Park Phase II. She is still looking at other funding opportunities for the \$6 million Freeport sewer project.

Commissioner Glidewell questioned if it has been determined if the Rescue Recovery Funds can be used on the C.R. 280B bike path. Ms. Thomason stated it can be used on recreation, but the rules are particular and she would rather use it on storm water projects and look for other funding for the bike path. Currently \$6 million is allocated for the Freeport project leaving about \$1 million from the first round of funding.

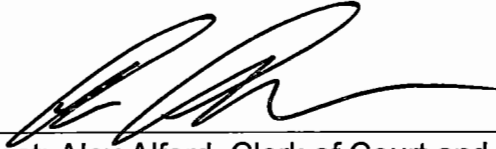
Mr. Brooke questioned where the customary use funding is for legal activity. Ms. Thomason stated there has been \$1 million set aside in the Professional Funding account. Mr. Brooke spoke about the EDA funds and the amount surrounding counties spent compared to Walton County. He urged the board to look at what is being spent. He also spoke about the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Alliance and cleanup of the bay and questioned what was budgeted. Commissioner McCormick stated \$6 million is funded to take septic tanks off the bay. Mr. Brooke questioned applying for a \$10 million grant from the Restore Act. Mr. Jones stated that is not grant monies. It was funding allocated to the 8 affected counties in the panhandle. The county's portion is about \$12 million. Further discussion was held as to how and when the money could possibly be obtained.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:48 p.m.



Trey Nick, Chairman



Attest: Alex Alford, Clerk of Court and County Comptroller