



MINUTES

Board of County Commissioners

Tuesday, July 12, 2022, @ 2:00 PM

DeFuniak Springs Board Room

Budget Workshop

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

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

STAFF PRESENT: Clay Adkinson, Interim County Attorney, Tony Cornman, Interim County Administrator, and Mary King, Interim Deputy County Administrator

OPENING COMMENTS

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Barker called the meeting to order.

MELISSA THOMASON, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Ms. Thomason briefly reviewed the following budget items.

1. Review of Budget Assumptions, Estimated Revenues, and Departmental Budget Changes

Ms. Thomason said the budget was drafted on the assumption that the millage would stay at 3.6363 mils for county-wide and 0.4912 for the North Walton Mosquito Control District. She announced that there was no increase in health insurance rates. She said she would be asking for direction regarding the cost of living (COLA) increases for the employees. The infrastructure funding for south Walton County stormwater and other infrastructure projects has been maintained at \$4 million. She said staff has looked at absorbing the costs of increases in personnel fuel and materials with the same millage and has been able to achieve that with the help of the property value increases. Ms. Thomason briefly spoke on the increases in property values, fuel increases, material increases, and the uncertainty of the inflation rate. She announced that the following items have been included or maintained in the budget, \$2.8 million for the Glendale Fire Station, \$1 million for the renovation of the MOJO building, \$500,000 for the expansion of Helen McCall Park, \$5 million for the future needs of the landfill, funding for Coastal Dune Lake monitoring and management, funding for the Choctawhatchee Bay Initiatives, and \$75,000 capital improvement funding for the parks, \$250,000 to begin capital renovations of all park facilities which will be considered as a recurring item. She said a funding amount for the Medical Examiner's facility was not included and

announced a meeting will be held between all the State District 1 board chairmen and county administrators to discuss an equitable distribution of the facility costs. Ms. Thomason said also included in the budget was the Public Works request of \$200,000 to reinstate the guardrail program, \$680,000 for the Eagle Springs maintenance building, and remodeling of the bathrooms for ADA compliance. She stated some of the larger items in the Facilities Maintenance budget include repair of the EOC Annex roof and \$205,000 for the DeFuniak Springs Courthouse weatherproofing. She said the focus is to maintain what the county currently had and to keep the capital projects moving forward. Ms. Thomason talked about the increase in Ad Valorem revenue from \$25.446 billion to \$31.272 billion.

2. Constitutional Office Budget Review

Ms. Thomason discussed the constitutional officers' budgets and noted that the Sheriff's funds do not include housing revenues which are budgeted separately. She briefly discussed the Sheriff's budget and FTE requests. She said that the budget does not include beach safety funding which falls under TDC.

She said all the Constitutional Officers have included a COLA for their employees.

She reported the Clerk of Court was requesting one FTE and that it would not impact the county budget. The Tax Collector's budget will be submitted by August 1 and will include an increase. The Property Appraiser included a 5.38% COLA and an FTE for a Quality Assurance Specialist. The Supervisor of Elections is requesting to increase the poll worker pay to \$13.00/hour and one additional FTE for a north Walton County deputy clerk.

3. Request direction regarding the Walton County Health Department's requested increase from \$971,263 in FY 22 to \$1,134,182 in FY 23

Ms. Thomason requested direction regarding the increase in the Health Department's discretionary funding. The increase includes primary care services and security for all facilities. The board concurred to include the increase in the budget.

4. Request direction regarding an increased budget request from the Council on Aging from \$10,406 in FY 22 to \$50,000 in FY 23

Ms. Thomason stated that the Council on Aging was pulling their request for an increase. She recommended maintaining their budget at \$10,406. The board concurred to maintain the Council on Aging budget at \$10,406.

5. Request direction regarding an increased budget request from the Walton County EDA from \$208,550 in FY 22 to \$258,550 in FY 23.

Ms. Thomason briefly talked about the requested increase and recommended approval. The board concurred to increase the Walton County Economic Development Alliance budget as requested.

Chairman Barker asked what the plans would be for the increase in funds. Mr. Bill Imfeld, Walton County EDA Executive Director talked about the County-wide Strategic Economic Development Plan and discussed the metal-bearing company that would be relocating to Freeport from California. The additional monies would aid in recruiting other defense contractors and subcontractors to our county. The funds would also aid in additional marketing for our area. He announced that Walton County will be one of the fastest growing, top 10, GDP counties in the United States within the next 10 years.

6. Request direction regarding an increased budget request from the Chamber of Commerce from \$3,206 in FY 22 to \$12,000 in FY 23

Ms. Thomason briefly discussed the requested budget for the Chamber and recommended approval. The board concurred to increase the budget as requested.

7. Request direction regarding an increased budget request from the Lakeview Center, Inc (d/b/a Chautauqua Healthcare Services) from \$25,000 in FY 22 to \$50,000 in FY 23

Ms. Thomason is waiting on additional information from the Lakeview Center on their request. She recommended waiting until the additional information can be received. The board concurred to leave the budgeted amount as is until additional information is received.

8. Request direction regarding a discretionary funding request from the Paxton Babe Ruth League in the amount of \$5,000 for FY 23

Ms. Thomason said this was the first league in Paxton for 13-15 years old.

Mr. Kevin Mock spoke about the Babe Ruth League which will allow boys ages 13-15 an opportunity to play baseball. There are several sponsors for the 12 years old and under group. Some individuals have helped fund the initial start-up costs. He said community sponsors will be petitioned for assistance. There is no recreation facility available for the league. Mr. Mock said they are unable to use the high school's baseball field due to the seasons running concurrently. He said he is dedicated to providing opportunities for the kids. He said there have been past opportunities for the kids to play travel ball which requires additional expenses. Mr. Mock stated there were 23 players signed up for this year and have been divided into two teams. One of the teams won their tournament. Commissioners McCormick and Glidewell spoke in support of the budget increase. Commissioner Anderson recommended doing fundraisers during the off-season to help offset the financial needs. He expressed his desire to personally donate to the league.

The board concurred to include the budget request in the FY 23 budget.

9. Request direction regarding a discretionary funding request for Liberty Fire District in the amount of \$125,000 for FY 23

Chief Tony Roy discussed the reasons for the funding request which include the increase in mutual aid calls and fuel supply. He said the \$125,000 was based on a past funding agreement that has not been received.

Chairman Barker recommended hearing the request from Argyle Fire Department before providing direction.

10. Request direction regarding a discretionary funding request for Argyle Fire Department in the amount of \$120,000 for FY 23

Chief Jonathan Day said the Argyle FD department is struggling because of equipment upgrades and fuel costs.

Commissioner Glidewell noted that their request was less than that of Liberty's and recommended that both departments be allotted the \$125,000.

Commissioner Anderson asked that both departments submit a report of the number of mutual aid calls that they have responded to.

Chairman Barker asked the department chiefs if there was a particular budget for these funds or would the funds be absorbed into the general operations. Ms. Thomason said that a funding agreement would be entered into and would require quarterly financial statements to be submitted to show how the county funds are being used.

Commissioner Anderson expressed his appreciation for all of the fire departments and the work they do to protect the citizens.

The board concurred to designate \$125,000 for both departments.

11. Request direction regarding a potential pay increase for employees in the FY 23 budget

Ms. Thomas talked about the mid-year increase and requested direction regarding an employee pay increase for the FY 23 budget. Commissioner Glidewell questioned if a 5% COLA and a step-raise for each employee could be considered. Ms. Thomason said that staff should be able to work it into the budget. She questioned if this would apply to both exempt and non-exempt employees. Commissioner Glidewell confirmed it would. The board concurred to include the raises in the budget.

Commissioner Anderson clarified that the raises would not apply to the commissioners. Ms. Thomason stated that commissioner salaries are governed by the State.

12. Request direction regarding the County-wide and North Walton Mosquito Control millage rates (currently 3.6363 mil County-wide and 0.4912 mil for NWMCD)

Ms. Thomason requested direction regarding the proposed millage rates.

The board concurred to leave the millage rates unchanged.

OTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Bob Brooke spoke in favor of the budget increase for the Walton County EDA and felt that it should be more to make it competitive with other counties with higher budgets. Mr. Brooke spoke in favor of the 5% COLA raise but voiced concern that step increases should only be given on longevity, outstanding performance, or merit basis. He did not recommend across-the-board step increases.


Chairman Barker said evaluation-based salary increases were discussed last year and asked when it would be started. Mr. Tony Cornman, Interim County Administrator said the performance-based step raises would start at the end of this fiscal year. He said there are both exempt and non-exempt employees and that exempt employees do not have a step increase plan. He understands that the exempt employees would only receive a 5% raise. Chairman Barker said merit raises should also be considered for outstanding evaluations to differentiate the employees with a hard work ethic. Ms. Donna Walsingham, Human Resources said that it was discussed to allow a maximum of three steps for employees who exceed work standards. Mr. Cornman said if the recommended FY 23 pay increase is approved then an employee would have the ability to receive the 5% COLA, an additional step raise, plus a three-step raise if an exceeds evaluation is received. Ms. Thomason asked the board to allow her staff to work with County Administration and Human Resources on a salary package to present for consideration. Further discussion was held on the step-raises, evaluations, and meeting the 2024 \$15.00 per hour mandate. The board concurred to direct staff to bring back a package that includes both exempt and non-exempt employees.

Mr. Jeff Talbert thanked the board for considering the funding of the Liberty and Argyle fire districts. Commissioner Anderson spoke about the excellent service Chief Rick Talbert, Mr. Talbert's father, gave to the South Walton Fire Department and the citizens of Walton County.

Ms. Megan Harrison, Chamber of Commerce, thanked the board for including the Chamber's request in the FY 23 budget and encouraged the board to consider additional funding for the Walton County EDA.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.



Michael Barker, Chairman



Attest: Alex Alford, Clerk of Court and County Comptroller