

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION II**

May 23, 2017

5:00 PM

Board Members Present: J. Harry Lange, Susan Andrews, Martha Chewning, Becky Langston, Jim Woods. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk.

Others Present: John Magazu (Recreation), Bucky Searcy (EMS), Ronnie Duke (Solid Waste), Joe Weldon (Coroner), Vickie Jamerson (Tax Commissioner), Jeff Culpepper (Water Works), Mike Brown (Public Works), Brian Williams (Community Development), Stacy Haralson (Clerk of Superior Court), Monty Davis (911), Cynthia Nelson (Prison), Robert Larsen (Prison), Jack McClung (Council of Fire Chiefs), Keith Schuermann (Library), Anna Donaldson (Animal Control), Christy Searcy (Accounting Clerk), Clint Chastain (Severn Trent Finance Officer).

Chairman Lange called the meeting to order and said the purpose to continue discussion of the proposed budget for FY 17/18.

BUDGET FY 17/18. Budget discussions continued from the May 16 meeting.

General Fund

- ▶ **Public Works:** Addition of FT Yard Attendant, remodel of office to meeting area, portable building for shelter area; recommended elimination of enclosed trailer, backhoe loader, and two replacement vehicles. Mike Brown, Public Works Director, appeared before the Board and explained the need for the Yard Attendant, the office remodel and the portable building. Regarding the recommended eliminations, he said that the enclosed trailer is needed so that it can be kept stocked with items (barricades, signs, etc.) needed for road/tree emergencies that occur after hours; that the backhoe is needed so that one can remain in the yard for pipe needs; and that the vehicles are needed so that a vehicle will be available for use in connection with the bushhog mower drivers and to replace an older truck. He also said that the work his department has to perform regarding work on business park property (for TNT, Hart Steel, Daesol) and the Ag Center is causing his road maintenance schedule to fall behind.
- ▶ **Animal Control:** Regarding the requests for a vehicle and an Administration Assistant, Mike Brown, Public Works Director, said that he is responsible for Animal Control; that there is a definite need for another vehicle; and that the Administration Assistant is needed so that someone will be at the Shelter during normal business hours Monday through Friday to handle phone calls, animals coming in, or adopting out animals.
- ▶ **Recreation:** Addition of FT Maintenance Parks Technician mainly for Ellerslie Park, but also elsewhere as necessary; and tools, equipment, tables, chairs, and mowers for Ellerslie Park. John Magazu, Recreation Director, appeared before the Board and confirmed the need for the Maintenance Tech to include that with that person on board, work could progress at a faster rate, and he responded to questions from the Board. He also said that the pool covers are still on back order with part of the issue being that most covers are 12" and ours are 18", and that the pool has been closed since April 20.
- ▶ **Sheriffs Office:** Addition of body armor for 33 deputies, 60 tasers, five police vehicles (which have already been ordered); recommended elimination of four new FT deputies. Mr. Dowling is to find out why 60 tasers where there are 48 deputies.
- ▶ **Superior Court (fka Court Services):** Includes attorney and court reporter for Juvenile Court; interpreters, court reports, and witness expenses; public defender and juvenile court expenses; and retired judges.
- ▶ **Tax Assessor:** Addition of FT Tax Appraiser I, vehicle for the position, and new computers
- ▶ **Tax Commissioner:** Addition of \$2,500 (for total of \$5,000) for new computers. In response to a question,
- ▶ **Vehicle Maintenance:** Addition of tire balancer and heavy duty rolling jack; recommended elimination of new FT mechanic position and new vehicle.
- ▶ **Volunteer Fire Departments (fka Fire Services):** Addition of cancer insurance coverage per state law; continue equipment stipend of \$10,000 for each of 10 VFDs, continue operation stipend of \$152,834 (\$13,894 for each of 10 stations and West Point); continue operation stipend of \$22,800 (\$3,800 for each of 6 substations); recommended reduction of \$140,000 for equipment stipend. Jack McClung, Chief of Chiefs, appeared before the Board and requested that the \$110,000 equipment stipend that is still in the current budget (\$10,000 for each of 10 departments plus \$10,000 that was rolled over from 15/16 for Ellerslie) be carried forward into the upcoming budget. He explained that purchases from the equipment stipend are approved by the Council of Fire Chiefs, after which VFDs are directed to contact the County for PO #. Discussion that the minutes of the CFC meetings reflect such approvals. Consensus was to encumber the current funds of \$110,000 for next year.

Outside Agencies

No changes from last year's budgets for Department of Family & Children Services (\$17,070), Health Department (\$250,000), New Horizons Behavioral Health Community Service Board (\$6,000), and Senior Citizens Center (\$9,100). Increase in funds for Library due to addition of FT employee beginning in January 2018 and increased utilities.

Special Revenue Funds. These are restricted in use, are self-balancing, and include:

- ▶ Confiscated Assets Fund: From confiscations; controlled by Sheriff.
- ▶ Jail Fund: From penalties placed on criminal, traffic, and ordinance violation cases from Superior, Probate & Magistrate courts.
- ▶ Law Library Fund: From fees added to civil and criminal cases (not to exceed \$5/case) from Superior, Probate & Magistrate courts.
- ▶ Drug Abuse Treatment & Education Fund: From penalties on certain drug related fines from Superior, Probate & Magistrate courts.
- ▶ 9-1-1 Fund: From \$1.50 surcharge on landline, wireless and VOIP phones and \$.75 on prepaid wireless devices. Creation of shift supervisor position so someone will be in charge on each shift (no new slots, just name change); recommended elimination of cost to resurface parking lot.
- ▶ Hotel/Motel Tax Fund: From 3% tax collected from hotels/motels in unincorporated area of county; funds distributed to FDR/DNR less a 3% administrative fee, and of the remaining fee 66.7% to County Chamber of Commerce and 33.3% to the County.

Capital Project Funds

- ▶ Public Improvement Authority Fund: This is a debt conduit for the Grove, the 2012 Water Works bonds, and the Community Center.
- ▶ SPLOST 2004 Fund: Remaining balance (\$145,563) earmarked for Pate Park playground equipment, the purchase of which will close out the fund.
- ▶ SPLOST 2009 Fund: Remaining balance (\$3,242,325) earmarked for Hardage Road (\$889,225), LMIG Match for 2016, 2017, 2018 (\$197,412), Roads (\$687,821), allocations to Hamilton, Shiloh & Waverly Hall (\$98,637), and transfer out to Library Construction Fund (\$1,374,230).
- ▶ SPLOST 2014 Fund: In progress, earmarked for Hamilton Business Park improvements (\$20,000), 911 CAD System (\$80,000), Hadley Road water improvements (\$200,000), Hardage Road water improvements (\$203,500), Fire Trucks (9 trucks, 2 brush trucks, 1 building) purchases (\$2,683,872), Ellerslie Park construction (\$250,000), allocation to Hamilton, Shiloh, Pine Mountain, Waverly Hall & West Point (\$867,500), and transfer out to Library Construction Fund (\$500,00).
- ▶ TSPLOST 2013 Fund: In progress, earmarked for County Roads & Bridges (\$223,882), Rails to Trails Project Phase I (\$258,118), bridge on Fortson Road at Standing Boy Creek (\$179,000), and transfer out to Airport Enterprise Fund (\$380,000)
- ▶ Library Construction Fund: In progress, reimbursement from State (\$1,500,000), donations (\$1,226,000), transfer from SPLOST 2009 (\$1,374,230), transfer from SPLOST 2014 (\$500,000), all of which are earmarked for construction of new Library.

Debt Service Fund

- ▶ Callaway Conservation Easement Fund: Paid by Callaway Foundation(\$143,957) to the County and used to pay on debt for 2,078.14 acres until 2026.

Enterprise Funds

- ▶ Airport Fund: Includes fence design (\$60,000 & funded by GDOT), design for paving access road (\$30,000 & funded by TSPLOST), update of Airport Master Plan (\$50,000 & funded by TSPLOST), and audit services (\$1,000), the usual maintenance agreements for AWOS and fuel system maintenance, addition of repairs and maintenance for Airport Terminal, installation of fencing (\$300,000 & funded by GDOT), paving the access road (\$300,000 & funded by TSPLOST), purchase of AV gas vehicle (\$45,000), and complete security system (\$15,000).
- ▶ Solid Waste Fund: Includes continued monitoring of landfill, repairs & maintenance to buildings and convenience center sites, pick up of recycling container at Pate Park (\$4,100), two replacement garbage trucks (for which Commissioner Woods suggested ones with rebuilt engines due to issues with new ones required by EPD), two replacement compactors, two replacement receiving containers, mower, pressure washer and storage building (for equipment, not records), debt on backhoe and tractor, and transfer of \$1,500,000 to General Fund. Discussion included the possibility of increasing the transfer to \$2,500,000.
- ▶ Water Works Fund: Includes continuing engineering services, technical services, billing system maintenance & support, water tank maintenance, and the usual supplies for water lines. It also includes an equipment trailer, trencher, two trucks, water system improvements, and water plant improvements. Also, GEFA debt repayment for new filter plant begins, transfer of \$622,173 to PIA Fund to pay debt service on 2012 bonds, and transfer of \$300,000 to General Fund.

Having completed all departments and funds, Chairman Lange asked if any of the Department Heads or Constitutional Officers wished to make comments.

Stacy Haralson, Clerk of Superior Court, appeared before the Board and said that she is grateful that the Board has included a 3% increase in the proposed budget and that the County is absorbing the 20-21% insurance premium increase; that employees expect a raise, but rarely see much due to the cost of insurance; that moving forward, that the Board keep the longevity (compression) issue in mind; that it was brought up during the Springsted process; that middle employees got left out but raising the minimum salary helped a lot, and keeping it moving forward will help; that the middle employees are those who are depended on daily to keep the County running whether they pick up garbage, keep the water running, or send jury summons, and law enforcement who protect us and keep us safe. She asked that the Board keep those in deliberations. She also said that the budget is a lot of money but she hopes the Board will try to find the funds necessary for the proposed budget; that she knows raising taxes causes people to cringe, which she did when she looked at her property tax assessment last week and realized that she pays Harris County only \$269 (county portion); that not only do employees need raises, there are many departments that need help - lights in the yard to load trucks in storms to get trees off the road; that while her book shelves are full, they are not important when compared to having ambulances on the road, sheriff's cars, keeping trees out of the road; that she is not going to worry about her book shelves, she will find another way to address that issue; that the Board should also keep storage in mind because departments are in need of same; that the library building will be vacant the first of the year and perhaps it could be renovated for use as storage or another office. She concluded by asking that the Board keep the employees in mind and that they are great assets to the County. Chairman Lange thanked Mrs. Haralson for her comments and agreed that employees are a great asset to the County; that the Board did make a promise to look at longevity raises; that there are many worthy projects in the County without the necessary funding; and that the Board will certainly consider all suggestions and not forget the work and dedication of the County employees.

Joe Weldon, Coroner, appeared before the Board and said that his budget is simple; that Cox Funeral Home is kind enough to allow space in their cooler room; that Cox has recently renovated their cooler room which resulted in a roll-in cooler and he has requested a stretcher to be able to facilitate same; that he has requested that he be provided with health insurance; that in this regard he sent an email to the Georgia Coroner's Association, and of the responses he received, about 90% of the counties offer health insurance and about 50% offer other benefits such as retirement.

NEXT BUDGET WORK SESSION. Chairman Lange announced that discussions regarding the proposed budget will continue during the Budget Work Session scheduled for Tuesday, May 30, 2017, at 5 PM in Commission Chambers (Room 223) of Courthouse.

ADJOURNMENT