

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

May 28, 2024
4:30 PM

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews (arrived at 4:46 p.m.), Bobby Irions, Scott Lightsey, Greg Gantt. Staff Present: Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk.

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Grant called the meeting to order and said that the Sheriff would be the first to address the Board.

Sheriff Mike Jolley addressed the Board and passed out an informational staffing document and advised that he has two vacant slots due to moving individuals to other areas to perform statutory duties. He stated that the Sheriff's Office is mandated to provide Court Services, sex offender registry, Courthouse security and services such as these. He said that one thing that they do that isn't mandated is traffic and patrolling but they do perform those services which utilizes the majority of his staff. He has requested three additional employees to replace the two that he has taken off patrolling to perform other needed duties and one for CID due to an increase in activity in sex offender registry. He stated that the crime rate has relatively stayed the same but since the new subdivision went in they have responded 45 times with 25 times in the first 5 months of this year. Commissioner Gantt pointed out that there has been a significant increase in "Personal Services" between 2016 and now, that we were catching up but that it is not sustainable. Sheriff Jolley advised that there has been an increase in the number of employees and that if we don't stay up with what is being paid around us that we will lose employees. Sheriff Jolley said that they do house checks and neighborhood watches but if they don't have the staff to do that they can't patrol.

Chairman Grant said that he spoke with Judge Lakes in Probate and Judge Lakes stated that he is good with the budget for the Probate Court. He further stated that the Finance Department has now been split out from Administration and includes five employees. Chairman Grant said that there are 428 total employees and that there have been about that number since 2016 and that in 2018 that there was a high rate of employee turnover and that it was not good at that time.

Chief Financial Officer Elizabeth Barfield stated that the numbers don't reflect the supervisory capacity that her position now has and that she would like to provide an increase in pay to one of her employees for an increase in job responsibilities and the growth that she shown over the last 6 months. She stated that it would be about a \$2,000 increase in the budget - and would change the hourly pay rate from \$20.59 per hour to \$21.64 per hour plus the 4%. Discussion was held about waiting to hear back from CVIOG related to the salary study.

Chairman Grant stated that the Board needs to be aware that there needs to be the addition of another County Manager salary added to the budget also. Discussion included Sheriff vehicles and employees; and whether the Road and Bridge Master Plan was in the budget (\$270,000 is not included in the proposed FY 2024-2025 budget).

Public Works Director Brian Griffith addressed the Board and said that the previously mentioned future equipment leases (two motor graders and one mini excavator); Public Works doing their own paving which includes two additional employees, a tack wagon, a dump truck in next year's budget but that this year \$153,000 for pothole patching and \$40,000 for the Transportation Master Plan could then be subtracted from the budget. Additionally, Mr. Griffith said that he would be able to resurface roads and pave dirt roads; that they could pave 7-8 miles of roads in-house for the price of contracting out 1 mile of road; that they could save about 1/2 on dirt roads and 1/3 on paved roads; that they could reasonably pave (resurface) ten miles of roads per year as an estimate; that Public Works will not be the same as a large paving company; that the County won't save money but that the funds will go much further; that they could fill the gaps but that LMIG resurfacing will still be contracted out; and that they can't pave "curb and gutter" roads but can take care of regular neighborhood roads. Discussion included that as services increase that staffing has to increase; that the Board will have to be careful about how roads are chosen to be resurfaced and/or paved; that maybe the GIS system can be utilized to assist; that decisions would still need to be made based upon not only the condition of the road but also how many citizens are serviced by the road; that they may be able to get "caught up" quicker; and that a dump truck will come in and be paid in the budget for \$170,000 and that the requested \$208,000 for another dump truck will enable Public Works to order and encumber a dump truck that will probably be received and paid from the FY 2025-2026 budget.

E911/EMA Director Melissa Price advised that she does need to have their line item for fuel for vehicles needs to be increased to \$5,000 because the amount included of \$2,500 isn't realistic; that if she needed to choose between the positions requested that she would prefer to have another assistant director so that she can use her two assistant directors to handle training; that she provided some additional information

to Carl Vinson related to positions; and that she would like there to be a path for employees to go from Communication Officer to a Senior Communication Officer and would like to be able to move employees up with certain required training so that any of the dispatchers could earn the promotion so that they could then train new dispatchers coming in. Discussion included that additional conversation should occur with Carl Vinson; and that as a director that she will have to facilitate individuals moving up with Human Resources.

Chairman Grant inquired of the Board how they would like to proceed to discuss the proposed budget and that they can review what they want to add back in tonight if they are prepared to do so.

Discussion included that the vehicle needs for all departments should come through Vehicle Maintenance; and that the Board will need to obtain some clarification on Sheriff's vehicles.

Discussion was that the Board had a consensus to make the following changes to the proposed budget:

\$215,000 was added for another County Manager in addition to what is already included in Administration;

\$44,000 was added for a truck for Animal Control;

\$7,500 was added to Community Center for a cleaning machine;

\$25,000 was added to Community Center for a pool scoreboard;

\$3,000 was added to Community Center for credit card fees;

\$50,000 additional was added to Recreation to Repairs and Maintenance-Site for Recreation for a total line item of \$150,000;

\$125,000 was added to Recreation for Moultrie Park field improvements;

\$87,570 was added for salary and benefits to the Emergency Telephone System Fund personal services and employee benefits to add another Assistant Director;

\$30,786 was added for salary and benefits to Magistrate Court to move the part-time Senior Deputy Court Clerk to full-time;

\$130,206 was added for salary and benefits to the Prison to add two new Correctional Officer positions;

\$121,520 was added for salary and benefits to Public Works to add two new full-time Equipment Operators;

\$40,000 was eliminated from Professional Services in Public Works for a five-year road and bridge master plan;

\$153,000 was eliminated from TSPLOST 2023 for pothole patching;

\$70,000 was added to Public Works for road damage;

\$42,504 was added to Public Works for a Tack Wagon;

\$208,000 was added to SPLOST 2019 for a new dump truck for Public Works; and

\$61,390 was added for salary and benefits to Vehicle Maintenance to add one new full-time Diesel Mechanic.

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS. First Public Hearing will be held during the June 4, 2024 Regular Session, and the second will be held during the June 18, 2024 Regular Session, with adoption by resolution to follow.

ADJOURNMENT. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.