

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

May 30, 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: Vickie Jamerson (Tax Commissioner), Jeff Culpepper (Water Works), Mike Brown (Public Works), Brian Williams (Community Development), Cynthia Nelson (Prison), Robert Larsen (Prison), Mike Jolley (Sheriff), Jimmy Carver (EMS), Wayne Morris (Tax Assessor), Bill Champion (Airport), Sherrail Jarrett (Elections & Registration), Cassandra Hernandez (Severn Trent Finance), Clint Chastain (Severn Trent Finance Officer).

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that Mike Jolley, Sheriff, and Wayne Morris, Tax Commissioner, were unable to be present during the last budget work session and would like to comment on their proposed budget.

Sheriff. Sheriff Jolley appeared before the Board and said that he was impressed with the budget and has no issue with same other than to request the four deputies be added back into the budget. In response to question regarding the number of tasers, Sheriff Jolley said that they were for Sheriff's Office deputies and Jail Detention Officers and are to replace the current ones, which are obsolete. He also indicated that he would purchase the body armor with some of his funds.

Tax Assessor. Wayne Morris, Tax Assessor, appeared before the Board and said that the person he is requesting is actually to add back in the slot that was inadvertently omitted during FY 16/17 budget process; that the position is one that produces revenue; that he requesting a 4-wheel drive vehicle because such is needed to get to some of the properties his staff has to appraise; and that he currently has two pick-up trucks and an SUV, which he is willing to give up if he gets the 4-wheel drive truck.

Chairman Lange said that the Board has some tough decisions to make in this budget and explained same in more detail for those in attendance. Commissioner Langston said that she agreed with Chairman Lane and added that the County has to have other sources of revenue; that it cannot continue to rely on property taxes.

**RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Commissioner Langston made the motion (at 5:30 PM) to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel issues. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed unanimously.

**RESUME BUDGET WORK SESSION.** The motion to go back into the Budget Work Session was made by Chairman Lange, seconded by Commissioner Woods, and passed unanimously.

**BUDGET FY 17/18.**

Randy Dowling, County Manager, explained the differences between the current year's approved budget and the amended budget as it appears on the March financial statement to include that amendments were made by the Board, but the proper budget amendment document/process did not occur, and that he will make certain that such takes place in the future. The differences included debt payment for Community Center (\$560,000) four FT Detention/Correctional Officers at the Prison (\$180,000), four PT Mower Drivers in Public Works (\$40,000), poll workers in Elections & Registration (\$25,000), equipment purchase in Recreation (\$50,000), aerial fire truck in Fire Services (\$200,000), expenses in 911 (\$890,000), and debt payment for Solid Waste (\$80,000).

Commissioner Andrews reviewed her suggestions regarding the FY 17/18 budget, as follows: change the FT Accounting Clerk back to PT (Administration), change the FT Administrative Assistant to PT (Animal Control), delete the Commissioners' lunches (for planning retreats), change FT Administrative Assistant back to PT (Community Development), change FT Yard Attendant to PT (Public Works), reduce remodel of office to \$3,000 (Public Works), delete one mower for Ellerslie Park (Recreation), delete vehicle (Tax Assessor), reduce overall department costs, not including personnel costs, by 3%, add the four (4) deputies using the funds allocated for Contingency, increase the transfer from Solid Waste from \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million, and to change the millage rate increase from 1.55 to .5%.

Commissioner Woods reviewed his suggestions regarding the FY 17/18 budget, as follows: delete recycling (Solid Waste) because there is no benefit to the County.

Commissioner Chewning asked about the \$4,342 overtime in Elections & Registration, and Mr. Dowling said that number could be reduced to \$1,000. Commissioner Langston asked about the request from an E&R board member to have advance voting at other location for more privacy in voting. Commissioner Chewning said that from a legal standpoint, the way the machines are built give enough privacy, but perhaps the machines could be turned further to give the appearance of more privacy. Sherrail Jarrett, Elections Supervisor, said that advance voting has to take place in her office (which is in the Commissioners' office).

In response to a question from Commissioner Chewning, Vickie Jamerson, Tax Commissioner, confirmed she is willing to give up her PT position and suggested that it be given to Community Development so that the requested FT position for that department can be put in place.

Longevity/Compression. Commissioner Chewning said that she was concerned about not doing anything to address the longevity/compression issue. Discussion included that the issue is difficult to address; that the CPI is 1.5%; that perhaps the salary increase could be 1.5% or 2% and the remainder toward longevity; that the 3% increase has been discussed for two months, but not yet approved; that a 1.5% millage increase will take away the employee raise because employee will end up paying the increase in property taxes; that perhaps some of the 3% increase toward the compression issue; and that at .25/year a 10-year employee at \$35,000 would be raised to \$35,875.

Commissioner Woods asked if the 5-Year Plans have been obtained, to which Mrs. McMichael replied that she is still missing a response from one department and is working on the list.

Discussion continued regarding various departments, to include: delete FT position in Library, delete the benefits for Coroner and make effective with the election in November 2018, delete body armor, change number of Shift Supervisors for 911 from 4 to 2, delete membership in the Valley Partnership, to have an accounting of the funds allocated to the Development Authority even though the Authority is not at liberty to expend funds without Board approval, perhaps the remodel in Public Works could be altered to reduce costs. Also, discussion took place regarding putting legal fees in the appropriate departments, which would be difficult since it is not known what departments will require legal work, so the fees are left in one area. Discussion continued regarding the four deputies.

Chairman Lange allowed Brian Williams to comment on his staffing needs. Mr. Williams said that he really needs to full time position; that several years ago, the department consisted of a director, a planner, four inspectors, and two assistants; that the department now has a director, two inspectors and one assistant; that the work is increasing to the point that another person is needed to keep things going; that permit fees, as well as other fees, need to be increased because the Department loses money on every application or permit; that building permits are currently at \$.30/SF and he would like to see it raised to \$.32/SF, but most counties base the fee on the estimated value of the construction; that it costs \$600 each time plans (for subdivisions) are sent to Carter & Sloope to review and the average fee paid by the developer may be \$310; that with rezoning, special use, or zoning variance applications a small fee is paid, from \$30 to \$50 depending on the application, and the appropriate board that hears same is paid, and as an example, a rezoning application fee is \$50 but once you factor in staff time, postage, and paying the Planning Commission (7 members) a total of \$350, the County has lost money. Consensus was that fees need to be addressed and that all fees need to be discussed at a later work session, but no later than February of next year for inclusion in the budget.

Ellerslie Park. There was discussion regarding the need for a FT Parks Maintenance Tech at the park. Discussion included that with that position, that employee could take over the clearing/maintenance of the Park currently being undertaken by Brian Williams, Community Development Director, which causes him to not be able to address his normal job duties.

Discussion continued with the suggestion that due to the lack of income from property taxes not coming in that spending be frozen until January; that large items are ordered but invoices don't come in for several months; that the County cannot continue to survive on property taxes alone.

#### Summary of changes

Administration: FT Accounting Clerk to PT.

Animal Control: FT Administrative Assistant to PT.

BOC: delete food

Community Development: FT Administrative Assistant to PT.

Public Works: FT Yard Attendant to PT; reduce remodel costs to \$3,000.

Recreation: delete one mower

Tax Assessor: delete vehicle

Contingency: take \$195,000 and move to Sheriff's Office for 4 deputies

Sheriff's Office: add the 4 deputies

Solid Waste: increase transfer from \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million

Millage: reduce from 1.5% increase to .5%

Probate: delete food

Recycling: delete

Elections: reduce overtime to \$1,000

Tax Commissioner: delete PT position

Library: delete FT position

Coroner: delete benefits (until Nov 2018 election)

911: reduce 4 shift supervisors to 2

All Departments, with exception of payroll/related funds: reduce by 3%

Water Works: transfer of \$300,000

General Funds: transfer of \$2,700,000

Valley Partnership: Chairman Lange to meet with appropriate individuals and if positive, a presentation will be made to the BOC regarding same.

**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**