

MINUTES FOR THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY NOVEMBER 23, AT 4:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #1, 301 WEST CRAWFORD STREET

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

The Chairman called the meeting to order.
Pledge of allegiance to the Flag
Roll call to determine quorum

The following members were present:

Mike Babb, Chairman
Harold Brooker, Vice Chairman
Lynn Laughter, Member
Barry W. Robbins, Member
Roger Crossen, Member (Absent)

Others Present:

Mark Gibson, County Administrator
Robert Smalley, County Attorney
Department Heads
Press

Budget Work Session:

Chairman Babb opened the 2016 Budget Work Session. Chairman Babb noted that the work session will be a discussion among the Board, County Administrator, Finance Director and department heads to gather information for the 2016 Budget. Chairman Babb noted that on December 7, 2015 the first public hearing will be held and on December 14, 2015 the second public hearing will be held and the Board may or may not vote on the budget at that time. Chairman Babb noted that several questions have been received though the budget question email that was set up on the Counties website. Finance Director Alicia Vaughn went over the Budget Questions sent in 11/23/15 by a Whitfield County Citizen:

1. Why budget overtime? That's like "free money".
A: Many of the services the county provides in the public safety area can be affected by unpredictable events (bad weather, criminal activity, etc.). It is not feasible or cost effective to increase full time staff to a permanent level to allow for the probability of these events, therefore budgeting overtime is the most economical solution.
2. Why such increase in public safety expenditure? How many officers have we lost? Stressful job, turnover expected
A: The finance staff has prepared a detailed analysis to explain the increase in our public safety budget. This document is posted to the Finance county website.
3. Large expenditure in recreation department? Do not spend SPLOST money until received
A: The Recreation budget was originally submitted with \$24,000 in utilities, cleaning services, & janitorial services for 6 months operation of the new Edwards Park Gymnasium facility. During the 11/23/2015 work session the time table for the gymnasium was reviewed and the proposed budget was updated to remove this expense due to the 2017 estimated opening date for the gymnasium. SPLOST funds can only be used for capital expenditures. All operating cost of SPLOST projects must be paid from the general fund.
4. Educational assist expenditure- how many & at what level for education? Which college(s)
A: the BOC has not offered an educational assistance program in over 5 years. The only benefit currently in place in relation to education is an "educational incentive". This incentive is awarded to an average of 20-25 people per year and is only given to employees who complete certification or degrees that are directly related to their current position with the county.

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5. What is the cost to the county for Commissioner's meeting?
A: There is no cost to the county for regular or special called BOC meetings. Neither the BOC nor the department heads receive additional pay for attending these meetings.
6. Are County Commissioners included in the health insurance plan?
A: Yes, if so, how much does it cost & how much do the Commissioners pay into it?
The BOC pays the same rates as all other eligible county employees.
How much do the county employees pay toward their health insurance?
A: an insurance cost chart will be attached to this document.
How long employed before employees can go onto insurance plan?
A: eligible full-time employees are covered the 1st day of the month following the first 30 days of employment.
Why not partner with Dalton city to create co-op to purchase Alliant insurance? If done, how much could the county save?
A: this is not a legal option for the county at this time. It is the county's experience that due to the number of employees and claim history that a self-insured plan is our most cost effective option. The City of Dalton is in a fully insured plan.
7. Reduce all constitutional offices by 10%
A: The constitutional officers are elected by the citizens of Whitfield County. The BOC is required to fund the budgets of the constitutional officers and any budget approved by the BOC must be reasonable and must provide reasonably sufficient funds to allow the county officer to discharge his or her legal duties. The constitutional officer's budgets are approved through an annual budget process and are the product of negotiation.
8. Cost for translator? Is it for languages other than Spanish? If not, why not hire bi-lingual staff?
A: The cost varies annually and by department. As an average, the court system has spent \$137,000 on certified translator services in 2014 as required by law. The majority of the services are offered to Spanish speaking citizens but must be provided for any required language. We do have some bi-lingual staff on county payroll but this staff is not certified to translate in the court system. It would not be cost effective to staff full-time translators.

The Board is also discussing the State Paid County Reimbursed contract with the District Attorney's Office. The County is proposing to transition employees on the SPCR contract to and have them become Whitfield County employees. This change will affect the Whitfield County Public Defender's Office also. Finance Director Alicia Vaughn noted the outside agencies that the County funds such as the Dalton-Whitfield Senior Center, Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation, Dalton-Whitfield Regional Library, Northwest Georgia Trade Center and the Family Support Council. The Board discussed the pension contribution funding and if they should fund it for 2016 if the pension is not funded it will bring the funding level down below 100%. The Board also discussed contingency fund which normally get used for capital projects or cost of living adjustments. Mrs. Vaughn went through the list of capital projects that total \$1.1 million that would come out of the General funds the list included capital leases, Buildings and Grounds painting and new carpet at the courthouse, new HVAC systems at animal control and the new recreation buildings, the remaining amount of the new accounting software, new desktops and laptops in IT, Tax Assessors new software appraiser application, new satellite system communications upgrade (this project will be reimbursed through a grant), and several upgrades for security at the courthouse. The Board also discussed the Indigent Funeral policy, the

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current policy pays a funeral home up to \$1000 for burial, the proposed change would pay \$450 to a funeral home for cremation services. The Board also discussed the Fire Department which is in the Special Tax District. The Fire Department proposed hiring fifteen (15) additional full time positions which would allow two (2) firefighters per fire station. Adding the additional staff will bring the ISO rating from 5 to 4 and would save taxpayers on their home insurance costs. This change would require a millage rate increase.

The next public hearing will be held on December 7, 2015 at 12:00 Noon.

ADJOURN: Unanimous

MIKE BABB, CHAIRMAN
WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BLANCA CARDONA, COUNTY CLERK

DATE: / /