

**MINUTES FOR THE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD MONDAY WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2017, AT 4:00 P.M. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING #1, 301 W. CRAWFORD STREET**

**SPECIAL CALLED WORK SESSION**

The Chairman called the work session to order.

**The following members were present:**

R. Lynette Laughter, Chairman  
Harold Brooker, Vice Chairman  
Barry W. Robbins, Member  
Roger Crossen, Member  
Greg Jones, Member

**Others Present:**

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

**Budget Workshop:**

Chairman Laughter called the budget workshop to order at 4:00 p.m. Chairman Laughter noted that this budget workshop is being held to further discuss the 2018 budget that is scheduled to be adopted on Monday, December 11, 2017 during the regular business meeting. Chairman Laughter also noted that a public hearing on the budget will be held on December 4, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Administrative Building # 2 located at 214 W. King Street. Chairman Laughter noted that the most discussed items of the 2018 budget are the non-profit and outside organizations that the County provides funding for.

Chairman Laughter asked if anyone from the Trade Center or Dalton CVB to speak on behalf of their funding request.

John Davis with Dalton CVB let the Board know that the CVB through their tourism efforts brings revenue into Dalton, however the Local Option Sales Tax is distributed throughout Whitfield County. Davis noted that they are requesting the funding amount that was received in 2016 of \$173,000, last year's funding amount was \$150,000.

Chairman Laughter asked if there was anyone from the Dalton-Whitfield Community Development Corporation that wanted to speak on behalf their funding request.

Alan Jewell from the DWCDC came forward and informed the Board that although financially they are in the debt with the City of Dalton they have made several changes and hope to have the debt paid off within the next two years.

Jennifer Shearin from the DWCDC informed the Board that the purpose of the DWCDC is to apply for grants that the County are not able to apply for.

Commissioners Crossen and Brooker noted that if this program should continue they would like the DWCDC to provide them with quarterly financial reports.

Chairman Laughter noted that the Board is in agreement to fund the Family Support Council for \$10,000.

Chairman Laughter asked if there was anyone for the Greenhouse that wanted to speak on behalf of their funding request.

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Charlie Eicholtz from the Greenhouse came forward and informed the Board that they provide services to all of the Conasauga Judicial Circuit. Eicholtz noted that Judge Partain started the program in 1990's and that funding from grants were used to offset costs. District Attorney Bert Poston noted that in 2013 the Greenhouse separated from the DA's office. Natima Walker from the Greenhouse informed the Board that caseloads have gone up 20%.

Commissioner Crossen informed the Board that the Whitfield County Health Department will receive less funding from the State in the next year, and that the Board needs to take that into consideration for next year's budget.

Chairman Laughter asked if there was anyone from the Dalton-Whitfield Library that wanted to speak on behalf of their funding request.

Darla Chambliss Director of the Northwest Georgia Library came forward and informed the Board that at this time the Library is open 46 hours and to keep this service level they would need the full funding request. John Hutcheson who serves on the Library Board of Trustees noted that the Library provides services and opportunities outside of school. Chambliss noted that they receive funds from the state but the operation costs are funded by the local governments.

Chairman Laughter asked Court Administrator Brad Butler about the Audio Visual update in one of court rooms in the Courthouse.

Court Administrator Brad Butler noted that with the advancement of technology throughout the years the current AV equipment is no longer efficient and makes it difficult to hold trials.

Chairman Laughter asked Butler if the update would help with acoustics in the courtroom so that the Board would be able to hold their meetings in the court room when/if the current administrative No. 2 building is torn down.

Court Administrator Brad Butler informed the Board that the court room itself has high ceilings and concrete walls that makes it difficult for any audio system to work effectively.

Commissioner Crossen noted that it's best to replace what we can sooner than later when it may be costlier.

Juvenile Court Administrator Robbie Walka addressed the Board about the request for a part time associate Judge. Walka noted that since the number of cases brought to Juvenile Court has gone up the addition of an Associate Judge would help ease the caseload.

District Attorney Bert Poston addressed the Board about his request to convert a part-time position employee to a full-time position to handle sentencing and court orders. Poston notes that by making this change they can reduce the number of days' inmates spend in jail to lower housing costs.

Commissioners had noted that they had discussed the possibility of ankle monitors to reduce the number of housing days also. Poston noted that they would have to pay a vendor for the

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services and also an employee would also have to monitor the people who would be released with ankle monitors.

Chairman Laughter noted they could do a year-long trial to see if by having the full time position is reducing the housing costs to the jail, and if there isn't a huge reduction the position would revert back to part time. Poston was in agreement and would handle this through attrition.

Captain Fields from the Sheriff's Office addressed the Board about the request for two additional Court Deputies to help reduce overtime costs.

The budget workshop was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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R. LYNETTE LAUGHTER, CHAIRMAN  
WHITFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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BLANCA CARDONA, COUNTY CLERK

DATE: / /