

**CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING - BUDGET
APRIL 25, 2017**

PRESENT AND ACTING:

**DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN
GENE BAILEY, VICE-CHAIRMAN
DARRELL MCDUGALD
JERAL HALL**

**MATT FUQUA, ATTORNEY
JOE WOOD, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
CARLA A. HAND, CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER
SARAH WILLIAMS, CLERK ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wise at 4:00 p.m., CT.

Clerk Hand stated the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the Board's directives for preparation of the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget. Clerk Hand stated her office normally puts the budget together, and then informs the Board how much money they need to reduce the budget by in order to operate within the millage without using reserves.

Commissioner Bailey asked about the increases in insurance. Clerk Hand stated health insurance rates will be increasing, along with possibly workers comp, but it is not known yet exactly how much these rates will increase.

Chairman Wise asked how much money the County makes with one mill. Clerk Hand stated about \$380,000. There was further discussion about millage rates. Chairman Wise asked if the County had been setting aside grant match funding for the volunteer fire departments. Clerk Hand stated the 2016-2017 budget does not include any grant match funding, but the previous year budget included \$15,000 in matching funds for a fire truck. Chairman Wise stated he would like to see a matching grant fund placed in the budget for the next fiscal year. Chairman Wise stated he hopes a County employee will be able to help find grants for the volunteer fire departments. There was further discussion about grant match funds. Chairman Wise stated he would like to see an increase in funding to the fire departments, and grant match funds. Clerk Hand stated the Board would need to decide how much they would like to budget for the fire departments.

Clerk Hand asked the Board how much they are willing to pay toward employee health insurance. Commissioner Bailey asked if the Board currently pays the total amount for employee health insurance. Clerk Hand stated the Board pays for the total amount of the employee's health insurance and the employee pays for spouse or family coverage. Commissioner Bailey asked how much health insurance is per employee. Clerk Hand stated the amount is approximately \$528 per employee per month. Clerk Hand stated if rates increase enough to place the premium per employee around \$600 per month, she

needs to know if the Board is willing to pay the total amount or require the employees to share the cost. Commissioner McDougald stated he thought the Board capped the insurance amount at \$500 at one time. Clerk Hand stated last year the Board opted to pay the increase in health insurance costs and reduce the wage raise percentage from 3% to 2%. Clerk Hand stated the Board would have to be careful with the Affordable Health Care Act, and would need to look at the lowest paid employee who receives insurance and make sure it will be affordable for them to share in the health insurance coverage cost if the Board chooses not to cover the full amount. Commissioner Bailey stated he would rather decide how much the Board would be paying for employee insurance first before talking about raises. Clerk Hand stated if the Board decided they can only afford to pay for one or the other, paying for 100% of employee health insurance would be a nontaxable benefit to the employee. Commissioner Bailey asked if there are any employees who opt out of the insurance. Clerk Hand stated there are only a few who opt out. There was further discussion about insurance rates and raises. Commissioner Bailey asked if there would be funding to give a 1% or 2% raise for the next fiscal year. Clerk Hand stated revenues estimates from the state are necessary before anticipated funding is known. Clerk Hand stated ad valorem tax revenue would likely not be increased from last year. Clerk Hand stated the amounts suggested tonight would not be permanent, and would only be used to put together the budget. Commissioner McDougald asked when the increase in health insurance rates would be known. Clerk Hand stated it is anticipated the rates would be known by early July. Clerk Hand stated she could put whatever amounts in the budget the Board wishes, and then they would know how much money they would need to cut the budget by when the time comes to pass the budget for the next fiscal year. There was further discussion about the budget.

Commissioner McDougald stated the Board needs to know how many sets of bunker gear the volunteer fire departments need for their certified fire fighters. Chairman Wise stated he would like to raise the amount given each fire department per year and have funding set aside for grant matches. Commissioner Bailey stated if matching funds are going to be budgeted, the Board would need to decide if the money would go toward the volunteer fire department funded first, or what other way they would like to use the money, because it would be hard to budget \$15,000 for each department. There was further discussion about budgeting money for the volunteer fire departments. Chairman Wise stated he would rather budget funds for the volunteer fire departments from ad valorem proceeds rather than adopting an additional half-cent sales tax. There was further discussion about the half-cent sales tax. Chairman Wise stated he would like to avoid the sales tax by increasing the funding to the volunteer fire departments. Commissioner Bailey stated he would like to purchase some bunker gear for the volunteer fire departments and look for some four (4) to five (5) year old fire trucks for the departments instead of the lease program that was previously presented. Commissioner McDougald stated he believes the best idea would be to increase efforts to help the volunteer fire departments get grants for bunker gear and fire trucks. Chairman Wise asked if the Board would still set aside funds to match grants. Commissioner McDougald stated the Board would still need to set aside funds to match grants. Commissioner McDougald stated \$15,000 could be set aside for a match for a fire truck, and set aside separate funds for bunker gear and other equipment. Clerk Hand stated if the Board sets aside funding for grants this year, but does not use it all, the money could be rolled over into the next fiscal year. There was further discussion about carrying money into the next fiscal year.

Commissioner Bailey stated last year about \$400,000 was carried over for the Road and Bridge budget. Commissioner Bailey stated this year the Board has voted to spend about this amount of money, and asked how much money could be expected to be available for next year. Clerk Hand stated about \$250,000 is expected to be available to the Road and Bridge budget from the local option gas tax revenue. There was further discussion about the Road Department budget. Clerk Hand stated enough money to fund the Road Department is not generated through road taxes, so funds from the General Fund will have to be transferred to the Road Department to fund its budget. Commissioner Bailey asked how much money would be available to transfer from the General Fund to the Road Department fund. Clerk Hand stated this amount would need to be estimated, but there should be \$200,000 to \$300,000 left in this year's Road Department budget to carry into next year's budget.

Clerk Hand stated the Board has expressed they would like to budget \$15,000 for a fire truck match, and asked how much they would like to budget for match grants on other equipment. Commissioner McDougald stated he would like to see another \$5,000 budgeted for bunker gear and other equipment the volunteer fire departments may need. Chairman Wise stated he would like to increase the amount of funding given to the volunteer fire departments. Commissioner Bailey stated he would like to give the same increase to the Blountstown fire department and Altha fire department as well as the other volunteer fire departments. Commissioner Bailey stated the city residents and the county residents pay the same taxes, and deserve to receive the same quality of service from their fire department. Chairman Wise stated he would like to see the volunteer fire departments budget increased to \$10,000. Commissioner Bailey expressed concern if \$10,000 is placed in the budget now, the volunteer fire departments will be expecting to receive this amount. Commissioner McDougald stated they would have to realize this is only the planning stage of the budget, and when the final totals are calculated some trimming may have to be done. Clerk Hand stated this preliminary budget is just an estimate to get the Board started on the budget process.

Clerk Hand asked how much money the Board would like to place in the budget for health insurance. Chairman Wise stated he would like the amount to stay the way it is the current year, with the Board paying each employees share. Clerk Hand stated estimates for retirement have just started coming in, because the bill has not been passed yet, but there will be a slight increase that will need to be placed in the budget. Clerk Hand asked if the Board would like any employee raises to be included in the budget. Chairman Wise stated he would like to see 2% estimated into the budget. Commissioner Bailey stated he would like to see 2% estimated also. Commissioner McDougald stated the amount could be changed up or down after the budget has been completed.

Clerk Hand asked how the Board would like to designate the revenue from fuel taxes in the County Trans II Fund. Clerk Hand asked if they would like the money to be designated for equipment, paving, or some for both. Commissioner McDougald stated the funds could be designated towards both equipment and paving. Commissioner Bailey stated the funds could be split in half between the two, and the Board could move the funds later if needed.

Clerk Hand asked if the Board has any directives to the outside agencies who ask for funding. There was consensus of the Board for the amounts requested to stay the same as last year and not increase.

Commissioner Bailey stated he would like the constitutional officers to receive the 2% raise along with the County employees.

Clerk Hand stated the Supervisor of Elections has to buy new voting equipment this year, and the funds will need to be a line item in the General Fund. Chairman Wise asked if money has been set aside for this purpose in the past. Clerk Hand stated this is a new requirement. Commissioner Bailey stated the Supervisor of Elections is searching for a grant to help cover the cost of the new equipment. Commissioner McDougald asked if Clerk Hand knew the cost of the equipment. Clerk Hand stated the Supervisor of Elections has been looking at two (2) different types of equipment, and has been looking at some equipment that is less expensive. Clerk Hand stated she believes the equipment will cost about \$200,000 without the help of a grant. There was further discussion about the voting equipment. Chairman Wise asked where the funding for the equipment would come from. Clerk Hand stated the funds would come from the General Fund and reserves. Commissioner Bailey stated hopefully a grant will be available or the legislature will help fund the new equipment.

Commissioner McDougald stated the air conditioning system at the courthouse needs to be addressed. Commissioner Bailey stated something needs to be done sooner rather than later if funding is available. Commissioner McDougald stated a quote was obtained from TRANE, but more pricing options need to be sought out on the air conditioning system. Commissioner McDougald asked if the County was counting on using reserve funds for the air conditioning. Clerk Hand stated in the reserve for contingency fund there is just enough money to cover the air handlers. Clerk Hand stated if the funds are not spent by the end of this year they will be available for next year. Commissioner McDougald stated Mr. Tim Jenks lined up the last quote, and asked if the Board would like for him to be in charge of finding other quotes. There was consensus of the Board for Mr. Jenks to be directed to get more quotes for the air conditioning system.

Commissioner Bailey asked how much the County receives from the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) funding, and how it is distributed. Ms. Angie Smith stated the EMPA (Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance) grant is a state grant that is used for salaries, and the EMPG (Emergency Management Performance Grant) covers equipment and recurring charges. Ms. Smith stated the County is required to match the EMPG grant 100 percent. Ms. Smith stated the EM (Emergency Management) local funds cover any salaries or expenses that are not covered under the EMPA grant. There was further discussion about the EOC funding. Ms. Smith stated her fiscal year with the state ends June 30 and the new fiscal year starts on July 1, and she will have to take some money from the EM Local fund to cover salaries this year with the addition of more employees in Emergency Management.

Clerk Hand stated a letter with the Board's directives would be prepared for the Chairman's signature.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m., CT.


DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


CARLA A. HAND, CLERK