

August 2, 2017
Board Budget Workshop
Judicial Annex Building
Live Oak, Florida

9:00 a.m.

The Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners met on the above date and time for a budget workshop and the following were present: Chairman Ricky Gamble; Commissioner Clyde Fleming; Commissioner Don Hale; Commissioner Larry Sessions; and Commissioner Ronnie Richardson. Clerk of Court Barry A. Baker; Chief Deputy Clerk of Finance Ken Williams; Neena Funicelli, Eric Musgrove, and Logan Woods, Deputy Clerks; and Randy Harris, County Administrator, were also present. James W. Prevatt, Jr., County Attorney, was not present.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and asked Commissioner Richardson to lead the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss budget requests by various County-affiliated entities for Fiscal Year 2017-2018.

Chairman Gamble called upon Clerk Baker to discuss some budget changes.

Clerk Baker stated that there had been an amendment to the tax rolls that necessitated a change in the DR-420 tax form. The rolled-back rate was lowered to 8.9540 mils as a result of the changes, which was lower than the proposed tax rate of 9.0000 mils. He reminded the Board that they could lower the millage rate through the budget process.

The first request was from Mrs. Glenda Williams, **Supervisor of Elections**.

Supervisor Williams asked for questions.

There were no questions.

The next request was from Mr. Lamar Jenkins, **Property Appraiser**.

Property Appraiser Jenkins asked for questions.

Commissioner Sessions asked how many properties had come off the tax rolls. Mr. Jenkins replied that there had been an increase in the number of properties on the tax roll.

Discussion ensued on agricultural fire assessments.

Mr. Jenkins stated that several properties had come on the tax rolls, but there had not been much in the way of commercial growth other than new construction on existing properties. He added that a new dollar store and a portion of the assisted living facility at Interstate-10 were new construction, while the AT&T building would be added next year.

The next request was from Mr. Barry A. Baker, **Clerk of Court**.

Clerk Baker noted that additional revenue had been brought into the Recording Department, with additional expenses caused by State legislative changes. He noted that part of the budget increase was also from the shift of Logan Woods from a part-time to full-time position to assist with the various County boards, as requested by the County Commission earlier in the year. Clerk Baker mentioned that network wiring would need to be updated in the Courthouse soon, and he would be speaking with the Judges to help cover part of it through their own funds.

Commissioner Richardson asked about the Information Technology Reserves set aside by the County last year. Clerk Baker responded that the proposed IT upgrades to the Courthouse would use the funds.

The next request was from Ms. Katherine Allen, **Extension Office Director**.

Ms. Allen requested additional funding for two additional hours per day for an employee for expanded technology usage mandated by the University of Florida, new flooring for the office, and a new stove for the kitchen. Ms. Allen stated that there was more participation in Extension youth programs over prior years, and she wished to support them in their endeavors.

Commissioner Richardson asked about public animal control education. Ms. Allen replied that her office dealt with education, but would need more specifics.

The next request was from Mr. Greg Scott, **Parks and Recreation/Airport Director**.

Mr. Scott briefly discussed the various budgets beneath his purview, starting with Parks and Recreation.

There were no Parks and Recreation-related questions.

Mr. Scott reminded the Board that one-fifth of the Parks and Recreation budget went to Branford.

Mr. Scott next discussed the Airport budget, stating that new requests included a fuel farm for Jet-A fuel, hangar expansion, and various grants. He noted that the FAA and the Department of Transportation were a great help.

Chairman Gamble asked about public requests to purchase fuel from the Airport during the week. Mr. Scott replied that the public could visit during office hours or use a security card to fill up their vehicles and boats at that point, if there were no aircraft in the area. He then discussed security issues with allowing the public to have unrestricted access to the Airport.

Mr. Scott discussed the Coliseum, noting that there had been many positive comments about the buildings and the grounds. He discussed rentals at the Coliseum to help supplement the County's funding, as well as partial grant funding from the State.

Discussion ensued on upgrades to the Coliseum facilities.

Commissioner Richardson asked about the Ranchettes Community Center. Mr. Scott replied that the Maintenance Department maintained the building while the Recreation Department

rented it out, but it was only rented out once or twice per year. He believed that there were additional keys for the building that allowed others to use the building without paying rent.

Commissioner Richardson suggested some upgrades to the Ranchettes Community Center, perhaps with public assistance, to allow the building to be more useable.

Mr. Scott stated that he would work with the Maintenance Department to develop a plan.

The next request was from Mrs. Betty Lawrence, **Director of Libraries**.

Mrs. Lawrence discussed the Library budget, reminding the Board that each of the three counties in the Regional Library System funded their own library functions. She noted that there was an increase in some expenses due to the new Dowling Park Library, with some funding coming from Library reserves built up over the last several years. Mrs. Lawrence mentioned that there would be an overall reduction in the Library's budget because of the completion of the Dowling Park Library and a reduction of grants awarded to the County. She added that she always budgeted conservatively. Mrs. Lawrence stated that the budgets for Hamilton and Madison Counties should be similar to that of last year, with a possible increase in Madison County for a new library.

Brief discussion ensued on library operations in Hamilton and Madison Counties.

Commissioner Richardson discussed revenues from Hamilton and Madison Counties, and that each county funded their own libraries.

Mrs. Lawrence stated that she was approached by property owners near the Branford Library to see if the County would be interested in the purchase. She noted that the Branford Library needed additional meeting and computer space, as well as a possible archive facility for springs-related information. The Branford property's suggested price was \$35,000.

Discussion ensued on possible property purchases and expansion in Branford.

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The next request was from Chief James Sommers, **Public Safety Director**.

Chief Sommers discussed the Fire budget, submitting additional handouts.

Chairman Gamble asked about fire assessment figures of over \$2 million. Chief Sommers replied that the figures included reserves, carry forwards, and other sources of revenue. He noted a transfer of funding for EMS purposes.

Discussion ensued on fire assessment formulas as regards to the State Statutes.

Commissioner Richardson asked about a \$154,000 increase in the contingency fund. Chief Sommers replied that it included rolled-over funds from the prior year. He added that maintenance costs would increase due to wear on aging equipment, hence a request for leasing new equipment.

Discussion ensued on maintenance not provided by the Public Works Department.

Commissioner Fleming asked if would be advantageous to hire someone to fulfill the fire-related maintenance projects. Chief Sommers stated that there could be some cost savings, but the liability for the work then fell to the County instead of the outside company, plus such an employee would be expensive due to the expertise required.

Discussion ensued on an increase of fuel prices and previous years' budget reductions.

Chairman Gamble called a brief recess at 9:59 a.m.

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10:09 a.m.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting back to order and resumed a discussion of Chief Sommers' budget. He asked about Fire Rescue vehicles at stores and restaurants. Chief Sommers

replied that vehicles could not sit down at a restaurant outside of their zone, so the vehicles Chairman Gamble mentioned were from the same zone.

Discussion ensued on the Volunteer Fire Board, and that it was disbanded due to the lack of interest from the public and a drastic increase in State requirements for volunteer firefighters.

Commissioner Richardson asked about online versus classroom training. Chief Sommers replied that the vast majority of classes had to be in the classroom due to hands-on training.

Discussion continued on volunteer firefighter expenses, and that basic minimum standards to become a volunteer firefighter was approximately 420 hours. The high number of training hours led to a decrease in interest in the volunteer services.

Commissioner Richardson discussed an increase in infrastructure at the Interstate-75/County Road 136 interchange and how it would affect Fire Rescue services. Chief Sommers stated that his department already responded many times to the interchange, and it would only increase with additional businesses and infrastructure.

Chief Sommers discussed requests for new equipment leases.

County Administrator Harris noted that the County's fire equipment was not usually new, but used equipment from larger governments that was passed down to smaller counties. Much of the equipment was not designed for fire use and had to be modified by the volunteer firefighters.

Chief Sommers stated that the County's ISO would be affected by older vehicles and the reduction in response times due to maintenance issues. He then discussed the age and maintenance costs of the firefighting vehicle fleet in detail, as well as proposed leases for new vehicles.

Discussion ensued on possible saving costs by leasing vehicles versus outright purchasing.

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Chief Sommers stated that the vehicles, whether purchased or leased, had to then be outfitted with additional firefighting equipment. However, maintenance expenses for leased vehicles would be greatly reduced.

Discussion continued on firefighting expenses and leases, including the possibility of five-year leases for fire trucks and seven-year leases for tanker trucks.

Chief Sommers discussed a new ISO study to be completed next year.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of new stations, including one on the north end of the County. Discussion also ensued on an increase in homeowner insurance rates if the County's ISO rating increased. The Board also discussed the annual expenses for leasing five fire trucks and five tanker trucks to replace the older machines currently in the fleet. The annual lease cost for the ten vehicles would be \$461,000. Water tanks in collection sites was also discussed.

Chairman Gamble stated that almost \$1 million would be required from the contingency fund for the five-year lease for fire trucks.

Discussion ensued on maintenance and purchase savings from leasing vehicles and the possibility of raising the fire assessments in the future to compensate for constant leases.

Due to time constraints, Chairman Gamble moved to the request of **State Attorney Jeff Siegmeister**.

State Attorney Siegmeister noted that there was a significant decrease in expenses due to the current fiscal year's purchase of new telephone equipment, although there was an increase in software licensing fees. Other additions were dictated by the State. He asked for questions.

Brief discussion ensued on facility costs due to the new State Attorney's Office.

Chairman Gamble returned to a discussion of **Fire Rescue Services**.

Commissioner Richardson stated that some of the annual maintenance expenses would be reduced if the County leased vehicles.

Chief Sommers stated that annual maintenance costs would decrease because newer vehicles would have less maintenance issues, and what issues they had would be covered under warranty instead of the County being forced to pay. After questioning, he noted that of the \$1.8 million Fire budget, \$1.2 million was for salaries.

Discussion continued on annual lease expenses compared to purchasing of vehicles.

Chairman Gamble left the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Discussion ensued on the use of contingency funds.

Mr. Bo Hancock stated that he had served as a firefighter for 38 years, and no matter what the Board chose, there would be people who would be upset with the decision.

Chairman Gamble returned to the meeting at 11:13 a.m.

Mr. Hancock stated that even if fire assessments increased \$10 per household, it would greatly reduce the County's reliance on contingency funds.

Discussion ensued on the cost-effectiveness of leasing several new fire trucks, the possibility of increasing fire assessments or finding other options to compensate for the expenses, and how much the contingency fund would be affected. Much discussion also ensued on long-term retention of employees, its effect on overtime costs, and Suwannee County's lower salaries compared to surrounding government and private entities.

Chief Sommers next discussed the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) budget. He stated that medical billing software costs would decrease in the upcoming year due to a change in software. The only increase in the budget was a slight increase for additional clothing.

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County Administrator Harris suggested that the annual increase in salaries for County employees be provided at the beginning of the fiscal year for all Fire Rescue employees, instead of waiting a full year for new employees as with other departments, to help with retention.

Discussion ensued on salary and overtime costs.

Chief Sommers discussed several EMS expenses and revenues, including a new chassis and the sale of three older ambulances. He then noted the possibility of leasing new ambulances instead of outright purchasing.

Much discussion ensued on the age of the ambulance fleet, the specific needs of the County's dual fire and emergency medical services, and new ambulance requirements from the Federal and State governments.

After questioning, Chief Sommers stated that Suwannee County was no longer receiving grant funding for ambulances because it no longer met the grant criteria.

A variety of leasing options were discussed.

Commissioner Fleming left the meeting at 12:08 p.m.

Discussion continued on the possibility of leasing various types of ambulances.

Chairman Gamble called a recess for lunch at 12:10 p.m.

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1:16 p.m.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting back to order and returned to a discussion of EMS.

Chief Sommers updated the Board on where things stood financially, noting that there would be some \$344,000 returning to contingency funds in the upcoming fiscal year. He explained

that the County could lease six vehicles for the same price to re chassis one vehicle. With the decrease in new billing software costs coupled with its increased collections, EMS should no longer require General Funds annually.

Discussion ensued on revenues and expenses for EMS as well as internal shifting of funds to pay for leasing vehicles without costing the Board any additional expense. The leased vehicles would be stationed around the County for 911 response, not used for non-emergency transport.

The Board agreed to take the issue of leasing ambulances under consideration.

The Board discussed non-emergency transport and billing services.

After questioning by Commissioner Richardson, Chief Sommers noted that it would cost approximately \$400 per household for fire assessments to privatize EMS, as there would be little in the way of cost savings. He added that Columbia County's fire service operated on \$220 in fire assessments per household, while Suwannee County's dual-certified Fire Rescue operated the same number of stations and vehicles on only \$100 in fire assessments. Chief Sommers explained the differences in Columbia and Suwannee Counties that would affect the ability to privatize.

The next request was from **Sheriff Sam St. John**.

County Administrator Harris provided a handout regarding the Sheriff's additional funding requests that had been reduced from approximately \$561,000 to approximately \$287,000, in addition to his approximately \$9.1 million regular budget. County Administrator Harris discussed the proposed additions, including new SmartCop software, laptops, and related equipment.

Commissioner Richardson suggested disbanding the Animal Control Governing Board and moving the \$10,000 into the Sheriff's budget, as there were only two remaining members of the Board and they were retiring in the next few weeks.

County Administrator Harris continued to discuss the Sheriff's budget.

Discussion ensued on balance forward and contingency amounts from the Sheriff's Office and the County as a whole. Discussion also ensued on a proposed Sheriff's Office 3% salary increase compared to the County's proposed \$0.50 plus 1% per hour salary increase.

Commissioner Richardson again discussed the Animal Control Governing Board and the possibility of saving expenses by eliminating it.

County Administrator Harris discussed the proposed SmartCop software expenses.

Sheriff St. Johns stated that his proposed additions would bring the Sheriff's Office into compliance with State and Federal regulations as well as allow better service to the community. The SmartCop software's annual maintenance costs would be approximately \$120,000 per year.

Discussion continued on the proposed additions to the Sheriff's budget.

The next request was from **County Administrator Randy Harris**.

County Administrator Harris stated that Mr. Massey had just retired, and the hiring of a new employee two months previously had been timed well. He noted that there were half the number of employees in County Administration compared to when he had been hired as County Administrator some five years before. County Administrator Harris noted that he expected revenue to be generated by the water treatment plant in the upcoming fiscal year, after a rate study was completed. He hoped to extend water services from the Catalyst Site to the I-10/US 90 interchange for anticipated growth. County Administrator Harris noted that proposed diesel fuel prices had increased over the current fiscal year and also discussed funds set aside for 173rd Road at the Catalyst Site once the railroad spur was completed.

Discussion ensued on Catalyst Site railroad spur expenses.

Commissioner Richardson asked about recycling revenue. County Administrator Harris replied that other than metals, there was not really much revenue.

Commissioner Fleming asked about the purchase of trash compactors. County Administrator Harris replied that the Board had not yet decided on the purchase of trash compactors, although long-term, the County would probably need them.

The Board discussed trash compaction and recycling revenue.

The next request was from Ms. Jennifer Payne, **911 Addressing and Database Manager**.

Ms. Payne asked if there were any questions about her budget, noting that it would be necessary in the near future to upgrade the 911 addressing software.

Brief discussion ensued on possible uses for 911 revenue, including equipment and office furniture for 911 Dispatch.

The next request was from Mr. Patrick Taylor, **Chief Building Official and Code Enforcement**.

County Administrator Harris stated that the Building Department had requested a large scanner to cut down on the paper records, and he would discuss it as part of the County's wish list.

There were no questions.

The next request was from Mr. Ronald Meeks, **Planning and Zoning Director**.

Commissioner Richardson asked about overtime costs, as they were not in the current budget. County Administrator Harris replied that Mr. Meeks attended various planning-related meetings after working hours, as he was no longer a salaried employee.

The next request was from Mr. Marcus Durham, **Maintenance Director**.

Chairman Gamble asked about service contracts. Mr. Durham replied that he was shifting private entities to an agreement in which he could discharge them at any time for non-compliance, instead of being locked into an annual contract.

Discussion returned to recycling revenue, which was approximately \$23,000 so far this fiscal year. It was anticipated that additional revenue would be collected as the solid waste collection sites were closed off from after-hours access.

Commissioner Richardson asked about the possibility of opening some collection sites for a few hours on Sundays to allow for weekend visitors. Chairman Gamble asked to have the issue placed on the wish list for discussion at the next day's workshop.

The next request was from the **Health Department**.

Susie Cook, Business Manager II, stated that there were no additional funding requests.

Brief discussion ensued on septic tank inspections, the backlog for which had been greatly decreased after the addition of employees over the past year.

The next request was from Dr. Alvin Jackson, **Economic Development Director/Tourist Development Council**.

Dr. Jackson asked for questions.

Commissioner Richardson asked about the reduction of marketing expenses. Dr. Jackson replied that he had shifted the funds to provide for his new employee's salary.

Dr. Jackson discussed the TDC budget, noting that this was the first year that it had been broken down into separate line items. Upcoming fiscal years would give a better idea of how much would be spent within each line item. Dr. Jackson noted that the TDC would be reviewing applications later in the month for what was termed Signature Grants, multi-day events costing

more than \$10,000 each. The TDC would then return to the County with recommendations. Dr. Jackson also discussed local events.

Commissioner Hale asked how bed taxes were collected. Dr. Jackson replied that it was a tax associated with visitors who stayed in hotels and campgrounds, which was then paid monthly to the Tax Collector's Office for disbursement to the TDC.

Chairman Gamble discussed Dr. Jackson's request for a marketing director. Dr. Jackson replied that half (\$27,000) of the funding would come from the TDC, with the other half from the existing Economic Development budget to replace the temporary intern currently employed.

Discussion ensued on the marketing director position and its cost to the County. With benefits, the marketing director would require approximately \$5,300 from contingency.

Clerk Baker asked that the Board reconsider their decision to shift \$100,000 from the Clerk's IT reserves to the County, as an audit had just been completed that showed the Clerk needed additional security features to protect against cyber threats.

County Administrator Harris stated that even after withdrawing \$100,000 from the Clerk's IT reserves, there would still be nearly \$100,000 left, and the County would have contingency funds if necessary. Clerk Baker replied that there was the possibility of additional IT expenses.

Chairman Gamble moved to wish list items.

County Administrator Harris discussed an electronic gate for Public Works/County Administration, as well as other infrastructure items that should be addressed in the near future. He suggested holding off on the proposed Extension Office kitchen until it could be placed in the Capital Improvement Plan, and reducing the mobile stage expense to \$75,000 for a used one. He removed the rock crusher from the list to be placed on next year's wish list, as the current one

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could probably last another year. Improvements to Mizell's could be taken from Capital Improvement funds, leaving approximately \$844,000 in proposed wish list expenses.

The Board reached a consensus to add to the budget the following items from the wish list: Mizell's improvements (from the Capital Improvement fund); Douglass Center improvements; floor cleaning equipment for the Maintenance Department; replacement vehicles and equipment for the Maintenance Department; HVAC replacement for Fire Rescue; Extension Office stove and oven; Exhibition 2 tables; two 4x4 crew cab trucks and one 2x4 truck for the Road Department; straw blower and trailer for the Road Department; seeder for the Road Department; \$50,000 for used trucks for the Road Department; patch truck for the Road Department; replacement scale house at the mine; one bulldozer for the Road Department; a mower, tables, boom sprayer, deep fryer, and \$15,000 for used trucks for the Recreation Department; new flooring for the Extension Office; approximately \$5,300 for a marketing coordinator for Economic Development; website developer for the Extension Office; and \$21,000 for the reclassification of two casual Maintenance Department employees to part-time employees.

Chairman Gamble left the meeting at 4:16 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Fleming called a recess at 4:17 p.m.

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4:28 p.m.

Chairman Gamble called the meeting back to order and continued with a discussion of wish list items.

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The Board also reached a consensus to add to the budget the following items: an HVAC-certified employee for the Maintenance Department; approximately \$16,000 for a part-time Coliseum employee for the Recreation Department; \$287,000 for Sheriff's Office expenses (SafeCop software, laptops, air cards, etc.); move \$100,000 back into the Clerk's IT reserves; two dump trucks, one vibratory roller machine, and one full-time driver for chip seal projects for the Road Department; and \$5,000 for a Building Department scanner. After budgeting for all wish list items, the amount remaining in contingency was approximately \$1,095,000.

County Administrator Harris discussed Solid Waste needs for a \$205,000 40-yard knuckle-boom truck and \$200,000 for Transfer Station flooring.

Chairman Gamble asked County Administrator Harris to look into opening solid waste collection sites on Sundays from 2-7 p.m.

There being no further business to discuss today, Chairman Gamble recessed the meeting at 5:07 p.m., to return on Thursday, August 3, at 9:00 a.m.

ATTEST:

_____, DC
BARRY A. BAKER
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

RICKY GAMBLE, CHAIRMAN
SUWANNEE COUNTY BOARD OF
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS