

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA
BUDGET WORKSHOP AGENDA
MAY 23, 2013
4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Eric Hinson, District 1, Vice Chairman (Presiding)
Brenda Holt, District 4
Sherrie Taylor, District 5
Jeff Price, Budget Director
Robert Presnell, County Administrator
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

ABSENT: Doug Croley, District 2, Chairman
Gene Morgan, District 3

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice-Chairman Eric Hinson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m., thanked everyone for attending and turned the meeting over to Mr. Presnell.

Mr. Presnell stated this was the first budget workshop for the fiscal year 2013-2014 and that Jeff Price had a presentation and afterward they would answer any questions. He added that 75-80% of the budget was done, but there were still a few unknowns out there.

Jeff Price discussed the proposed budget and explained the preliminary revenues and stated there was a decline from last year of the major revenue sources. He added the estimated Rolled Back Rate was 9.1038.

He expounded on the recommended budget items and that they recommended on the discretionary sales tax to take a couple hundred thousand dollars out of the Public Works share and put it into fire department share so they could start matching money for fire trucks in the future. He added that the community organizations last year totaled approximately \$350,000 and this year to date they were requesting over \$460,000; Quincy Shuttle had been budgeted \$36,000; \$75,000 budgeted for the Summer Youth program; \$33,000 for Code Enforcement for clean-up; they reduced the budgeted amount for Medicaid to \$750,000; added \$66,000 for cell tower consultants for the Property Appraiser, \$30,000 for Friendship Park improvements, \$100,000 for road stripping; and \$50,000 for Reserve for Contingency account. He then listed the Capital Outlay and proposed projects. He said they were here to answer any questions the Board may have or if anything needed to be added or taken away from the budget.

Mr. Presnell said Commissioner Morgan could not be at the meeting, but he had requested some additions in the budget:

- \$25,000 additional for the Clerk's Office
- Full funding for libraries to achieve long term goals.

Mr. Presnell said that a lot of the big ticket items were already built into the budget and things so far were well balanced. He also asked if there was anything they wished to do for the employees as far as compensation or some type of bonus because in his opinion, it had been quite some time since there had been a raise for employees.

Commissioner Holt

She stated if the County was not able to give raises, maybe there would be enough money to give bonuses and asked to see data on that.

She said concerning economic development, there needed to be something in place to help bring in jobs.

Mr. Presnell said he had increased the amount to \$80,000 and that currently they were contracted with the Chamber for economic development.

Commissioner Hinson

Commissioner Hinson said he had considered increasing that amount to \$100,000 and then hiring an executive director to help with economic development.

Commissioner Holt

She mentioned using some of the closed schools to put businesses in, they needed water and sewer and the schools already had that in place and a restaurant could open up in place of the cafeteria.

Commissioner Hinson

He said he would like to put money into our own economic development and then set aside money for executive director to travel, be able to go to conventions.

Mr. Presnell stated he had met with Beth Kirkland and the minimum amount she had suggested be budgeted for economic development was \$200,000.

Commissioner Taylor

She stated that what the Board was saying sounded good and she wholeheartedly believed it was time to go into a different direction with economic development, but she was not in favor of funding the Chamber anymore because it had not worked in the past. She added when the full Board came back and it was time for a debate and time for folks to put their position out there, that currently the three of them were in unison, but one would back out. She added it had gotten to the point she could not go anywhere without being asked about jobs. She further stated it was time to be smart, not political, that “all the waiting, let me see, let me study, let me talk, was killing our county.”

She added that \$100,000 was a perfect number, but she wanted to make sure that some funds were designated to the Small County Incubator program; because that was the only one that the Board ever heard anything from and would like to isolate between \$25,000-30,000 for the program.

Commissioner Hinson

He stated if his record was looked at, he was very consistent and mentioned that they could look at his campaign statements; he was for transportation and had been on top of it. He added that he also wanted to establish and support a county economic development program. The reason why he changed his position was because Commissioner Taylor had stated that she supported the Chamber. He added that he was not throwing away his support for the Chamber. He further added that he had talked with business folks in his district, and most of them had told him to get rid of the Chamber. He stated that one good thing about him was he listened to the community and he listened to the issues and if he asked for a couple of weeks to think and reflect on things, there was a reason why.

Mr. Presnell said he had spoken with Michael Taylor several weeks back because economic development had been on his front burner since being hired, and it could be done through the development council under the Board or it could stay where it was at, there was nothing that locked it down where it currently was.

Commissioner Holt

She said she understood what was being said about the Chamber and about the incubator program, but before she could vote for the Chamber, they would have to show her something. She said she was more for manufacturing because those jobs had a tendency to produce a needed product and to last a little bit longer. She added there was a need for someone to see what the needed product was. She further stated that it would be hard to get businesses in this area until there were changes made to the zoning laws. She added that it would help to hire people to “match up the information with the money to come up with the results we need to come up with.”

Mr. Presnell

Mr. Presnell stated a survey was being done to help determine what jobs and opportunities to bring in; a Resolution was ready, just waiting on the Board to adopt the resolution that pertained totally to economic development.

Commissioner Taylor

She said she appreciated having the survey done.

She added that they had attempted to get the Chamber to come in on a quarterly basis to give the Board updates on what was happening and so far that had not happened.

She explained her position to Commissioner Hinson regarding her support of the Chamber and said at the time, they were the only “game in town”.

She stated she was with Commissioner Holt on the employee bonuses and explained that the budget would not support a 3% increase every year, but the employees deserved it.

Commissioner Hinson

He stated for retirement sake, the employees were better off with a raise instead of a bonus. He added there was \$5 Million surplus in the bank. He commented on the amount of money that was paid to the attorneys for their monthly statement and the Board needed to make sure they were spending “wisely”.

Commissioner Taylor

She stated she heard what Commissioner Hinson was saying, but commented that they could not support a raise year after year when the revenues were steadily declining and if the Board kept on hitting the bank and the surplus money, without economic growth and development, eventually there would be nothing left.

Commissioner Holt

She stated there needed to be a comparison done between giving bonuses and raises and asked that data be brought back to the Board.

She added that it did not bother her with revenue being down because there were some bad laws that needed to be changed and she added that the Citizens' Bill of Rights needed to be changed.

Commissioner Taylor

She asked Commissioner Holt if there was any reconsideration this year to giving money back to the non-profits that had been taken away from them last year.

Commissioner Holt

She suggested they could take the money from the Chamber and give it to the non-profits.

Commissioner Taylor stepped out.

Commissioner Taylor returned.

The Board discussed transportation issues.

Mr. Presnell

Mr. Presnell stated they were currently funded at this year's levels and he said he would look at the 3% for all of the non-profits and would have numbers for the Commissioners at the next workshop. He also mentioned there had been talk to expand the transportation services and add routes to include Chattahoochee, Greensboro, Gretna and Havana and the routes would tie in to go to Tallahassee to the CK Steele terminal and said the quote was for \$48,000.

The Board asked him to get the figures and information and bring it back to them.

He added there were some security issues at the Courthouse and there may be some state funding available and a few dollars might have to be put with it.

He then asked about privatization of probation by vendors and stated that the probation people had told him they could not compete with the vendors.

Commissioner Holt

She stated she would like to hear from personnel in Probation before making any decision.

Commissioner Taylor

She asked how much was budgeted for emergency repairs and asked if it could be for a total of \$35,000 and divide it between each district.

Commissioner Hinson

He asked if a change could be made concerning travel being placed on the agenda and asked if an amount could be budgeted and then stay within the allotted budget would it then not have to be placed on the agenda. He said that when you have the opportunity to go to the workshops, you have the experience to learn some new things. He added that with such an item being on the agenda, it would tend to let people know when a commissioner would be out of town.

Commissioner Holt

She asked that \$20,000 be added to the budget to allow the meetings to be televised.

Commissioner Hinson

He said the meetings being televised were not available in his district, it was only in certain areas, and he felt like more would be done without them being televised.

Commissioner Holt added it was her belief that the television cameras would make people more aware of what the County provided.

Commissioner Hinson said it was his belief things would run a little smoother and would not have to worry about folks “grandstanding”.

Commissioner Holt stated that two lawsuits were fought off because of the televised meetings.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business, the Acting Chairman declared the meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**ERIC HINSON, VICE CHAIRMAN, PRESIDING
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

ATTEST:

**MARCELLA BLOCKER, DEPUTY CLERK
FOR NICHOLAS THOMAS**