

**AT A BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR
GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON AUGUST 1, 2013,
AT 4:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS
WERE HAD, VIZ:**

Present: Doug Croley, Chair-District 5
Eric Hinson, Vice-Chair-District 1
Gene Morgan, District 3
Brenda Holt, District 4
Sherrie Taylor, District 5 (arrived late)
Jeff Price, Budget Director
Nicholas Thomas, Clerk of Court
Robert Presnell, County Administrator
Deborah Minnis
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk

*****NOTE******There were technical difficulties with the recording video equipment for this meeting.*

INTRODUCTION BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Chair Croley called the meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Presnell outlined the budget process and stated staff had reviewed the different line items and was glad they had because of the increases in FRS (Florida Retirement System) and the costs of medical insurance. He also explained the decrease in revenues with fuel tax, but added the property tax revenues leveled off.

Chair Croley reminded everyone this was a workshop and that no decisions would be made at this workshop.

FY14 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Jeff Price went over the revenues and explained the ad valorem taxes had leveled off. He added the gas taxes had declined and there were increases expected from the State for libraries and mosquito control and they were looking to use approximately \$150,000 from Ordinance # 74-1 as matching funds for fire trucks.

FRS Rates

Mr. Price explained there were increased rates from the State regarding the retirement system, some of the rates increased by 23%.

Health Insurance

Mr. Lawson said the County was facing a 6% rate increase if they stayed with the same prescription drug program and same benefit plan and there would be a rate increase of \$102,000. He added the insurance committee had recommended to the Administrator to maintain the current percentage breakdown that the Board was currently paying and the employees' share would increase slightly as

well so both sides would share in the increase. He added they had looked at additional quotes from Blue Cross and Blue Shield but they were not as favorable as the quotes from Capital Health Plan and it was recommended to stay with CHP and share the increase with the employees.

Commissioner Taylor arrived at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan asked how the employees were currently participating in the insurance costs.

Mr. Lawson explained that if they maintained the same percentage breakdown that they currently have, the Board pays 85% for single coverage, 70% for both single and spouse and single and dependents and 85% for family coverage.

Commissioner Holt stated she would like to see the quotes given by Blue Cross and Blue Shield and stated if an employee was making minimum wage, which could pose a hardship.

Chair Croley asked what would happen if, like much of the private sector, the County paid 100% of employee costs only, how would that impact the County.

Mr. Lawson said if the County paid 100% of the employee costs, there would be a savings of \$213,533.76 to the County.

Mr. Al Lawson appeared before the Board and explained the rates and the differences in the program with Florida Blue (formerly Blue Cross and Blue Shield) and CHP.

The Commissioners asked questions and had more discussion regarding rates and the program.

Mr. Al Lawson offered to review the insurance coverage individually with the employees, as he found in doing so with the School Board employees, he was able to save them from having things on their plan that they would not need and thence would increase their salary.

Debra Sisk, Major Account Manager with CHP, appeared before the Board to answer questions.

Chair Croley asked if there was anything that had not been done that could be done to reduce the costs.

Ms. Sisk answered “No”.

Mr. Presnell asked if an employee wellness program would help to reduce the rates.

Ms. Sisk responded that Leon County had a Wellness Coordinator and was currently researching that.

Employee Compensation

Mr. Presnell mentioned the different options and said at the previous budget workshop, there were a couple of ideas bounced around, but the consensus at that time was a \$1,000 bonus to all employees and added in doing that, the costs to the County would be \$220,000. Three options were presented to the Board:

- \$1,000 bonus to all employees at an estimated cost of \$220,000;
- 3% raise to all employees at an estimated cost of \$207,000; and
- 4% raise for employees earning less than \$30,000 and 2% raise for all others with an estimated cost of \$185,000.

There was discussion among the Board.

Chair Croley asked if the figures included all FICA, social security, etc.

Mr. Lawson stated the last time there was an increase was in 2011 and prior to that was 2008.

Mr. Presnell said he preferred option 3.

Commissioner Morgan stated because a dollar is budgeted did not mean it had to be spent.

Commissioner Holt said she had no problem in giving incentives, but there needed to be tight guidelines.

Chair Croley asked if there was a consensus that they know number 3 could be easily accepted.

Commissioner Taylor said she agreed to incentives, but it was only to be used if it was attached to a cost saving deal.

Expenditures

Jeff Price explained the different expenditures that have been placed in the budget:

- \$448,000 for community organizations-an increase of approximately \$97,000;
- \$36,000 for Quincy Shuttle and \$51,000 for Gadsden Express for an expanded route;
- \$75,000 for summer jobs program in the HR budget;
- \$50,000 for Code Enforcement to clean up items;
- \$750,000 for Medicaid-reduced by \$186,000;
- \$60,000 for cell tower consultant for the Property Appraiser;
- \$48,000 for Friendship Park improvements;
- \$50,000 for the Reserve for the Contingency account;
- \$1,000 bonus for each employee-nearly \$220,000;
- FRS rate increases of nearly \$300,000;
- Medical insurance estimated increase of 6%-BOCC share is approximately \$100,000; and
- \$455,000 Constitutional Officers increase.

Mr. Presnell informed the Board that this was items that were currently included in the budget and asked if anyone had any questions.

Chair Croley asked about the \$97,000 increase of Not for Profit groups and reminded everyone the need to be fiscally conservative and added there was ad valorem tax money, property tax money and fuel tax money and there was a “tin cup”, there might be some grant money and state revenue sharing added to it, but that was the only revenue there currently was.

Mr. Presnell clarified that there were other items that included economic development.

Capital Outlay

Mr. Price said that currently there was \$400,000 re-appropriated for jail needs.

Mr. Presnell interjected that bids were opened for the jail locks and the low bid was \$480,000 and the high bid was approximately \$700,000 and he would need to find additional monies to fund the jail locks request.

Mr. Price continued and stated in the General Fund, the following had been budgeted:

- Chiller for the Hospital-\$131,000;
- water heater \$30,000 and repair the radio tower \$35,000 for the Jail;
- van for Veteran's Services-\$24,000;
- incinerator for Animal Control \$36,000;
- cardiac monitors for EMS; and
- fire trucks \$150,000 and hydrants \$35,000 for Fire Control.

Mr. Presnell added that the \$150,000 for the fire trucks was the required match for the grants for the fire trucks.

Chair Croley asked for \$20,000 for park improvements and match money and added that he had received a call from the Governor's Office and the County might be able to acquire a lease arrangement of 300 acres from BASF that would serve as an off-road trail type park for the Havana area and there might be a need to have money available for signs, etc.

There was more discussion among the Board.

Commissioner Morgan stated that precautions were needed to ensure the reserves were not used up.

Chair Croley added that the Board had achieved the level of the cash balance that the auditors had recommended.

Clerk Thomas said they were at the level he had suggested; the auditors wanted the cash balance to be at \$8 Million.

Chair Croley added with that level being achieved, they could utilize a little more money than they had in the past from the revenues coming in, even though they may be down.

Commissioner Morgan asked what revenues were trending and what expenses were trending for the next 3-5 years.

Clerk Thomas said gas tax revenue was down or was flat, as was property tax, there was not a lot more revenue as was mentioned earlier and the operating costs were covered within the budget without using the fund balance.

Commissioner Morgan said the Board had done well so far, but it was more important to move forward because increases could come on fast. There could be tremendous costs with retirement

and Medicaid.

Mr. Presnell said this was a good safe budget that took care of the needs of the employees and the citizens.

Commissioner Morgan said we had been blessed on how efficient the tax appraiser and collector have run their offices.

Constitutional Officers

Mr. Price said a lot of the increases for the constitutional officers were FRS related.

Mr. Presnell commented that all FRS increases were covered in the budget.

Clerk Thomas commented on how appreciative he was of their efforts in restoring the Clerk's Office to the level of being able to operate efficiently and provide a better level of service.

Commissioner Hinson stated for the record, he was 100% in support of the Clerk and wanted to continue his support to help him grow and to be able to make him successful.

Commissioner Taylor asked about the increase in the constitutional officers, if the entire amount was for FRS.

Mr. Presnell said other than the cell tower consultant for the property appraiser and the position in the finance department for the Clerk, everything else was FRS and health insurance related.

Commissioner Taylor asked questions concerning the different line items in the budget. She used for example the budget for Supervisor of Elections and stated their budget was the same amount as it had been during the presidential election but she didn't see the need for that much this year and it concerned her that the level of the budget did not differ.

Commissioner Holt stated that every so often there was a need to go through the budget line by line to see what was needed and what might be able to be cut.

Commissioner Taylor asked Mr. Presnell for a break-down of the different constitutional officers' budget requests so the commissioners would know what amounts were for FRS and insurance and what amounts were for other requested items.

Chair Croley commented that the Florida Retirement System and the health insurance was the biggest reason for the increase in the budget.

Other Government and Community Organizations

Mr. Price explained what was funded last year and what was requested by the agencies and what was recommended.

Chair Croley said there was a Speaker Appearance Form from Recie Culpepper and called her forward.

Recie Culpepper, representing Alzheimer's Project, Inc., 682 Timber Run, Havana, FL, appeared

before the Board and thanked the Board for allowing her to speak and stated she was present to request \$5,000 and asked that the Board continue to fund additional days of respite for Alzheimer's clients in Quincy. She explained that the respite program would allow caregivers to be able to run errands, etc. while being assured the client is being looked after.

Commissioner Hinson stated he had intended to contact someone along with the Sheriff's Department because of a need for such a program in this area.

Ms. Culpepper informed the Board they had tried working with the Pilot Club of Quincy along with the Gadsden County Sheriff's Department in trying to launch Project Lifesaver for Alzheimer's patients in the Gadsden County area. She further added in speaking with Major Wood, he told her the Sheriff Department's costs was approximately \$50,000 to locate one lost individual and with their transmitter bracelets, an individual could be located within 30-45 minutes and help reduce the expense.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Holt returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Chair Croley called Mary Dekle to come forward.

Mary Dekle, Legal Services of North Florida, 121 North Jackson Street, Quincy, FL, appeared before the Board and explained some of the economic impact they have made on the community within the past year. She explained that in the past year they had represented 494 Gadsden County households in the area of civil legal assistance issues that included landlord-tenant, foreclosure defense, consumer fraud, domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse. She explained that during the last year they had received \$27,364.08 in annual child support for people in Gadsden County, \$30,174 in annual disability benefits, \$96,654 in reduced tax liability and \$17,961.24 in tax refunds for a total of \$172,153.32 for the year. She added if you took the annual benefits that had been gotten for people and conservatively extract 10 years for child support and disability benefits for 20 years, there was a grand total of \$991,835 in revenue generated for the people of Gadsden County in one year alone; add to that salaries of 8 people working in their office and along with the mortgage on the historic building they purchased, maintenance, utilities and regular expenses, the impact of Legal Services in Gadsden County is conservatively \$1 Million a year. She added that they were a job creator, an economic boom for the community and that they also save lives, keep residents in their homes and create hope for those without a future. She further added that last year Legal Services provided \$253,963 in legal representation for the people of Gadsden County. She thanked the Commission for their support and asked that they look at the full \$20,000 that had been requested.

Juanita Ross, Program Director, Big Bend Habitat for Humanity, 2921 Roberts Avenue, appeared before the Board and said she was here in case anyone had questions. She added that they were requesting funds in the amount of \$11,000 and while she was a grant writer, some of their projects like to see matching funds to go along with their projects.

Commissioner Hinson stated in looking at the Gadsden County Health Department, they had provided a strong service in the County and thought they needed to be more aggressive.
Commissioner Taylor stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Hinson stated he would like to increase the amount to \$150,000.

Mr. Presnell stated that they are funded in another line item with the Indigent Health Tax that is transferred to the Health Council.

Commissioner Taylor returned at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan asked what the requirements were for reporting from the different non-profit organizations.

Mr. Presnell responded they were to file reports quarterly.

Commissioner Morgan stated that the Boys and Girls Club received \$150,000 (\$75,000 for each club in Gadsden County) and said that was a lot of money. He asked about the Havana Senior Center and asked if this was a new operation?

Mr. Presnell stated he went there and they showed him around and they have been there for a long time. He added in researching them, the County had funded them for a few years in the past.

Commissioner Morgan asked if there were any other senior centers located in Gadsden County and Commissioner Holt said there was one located in Gretna.

Commissioner Morgan asked why do for one and not do for the rest of the senior centers that are active in the community. He added he was aware there was an active center in Chattahoochee and they were not receiving any funds from them.

He asked if Redeemed, Inc. was still being funded through the Sheriff's budget.

Mr. Presnell said he knew she was getting grants, that some were on their agenda and added she was still getting the funds that she had received in the past.

Commissioner Taylor said she appreciated looking at the County as a whole and trying to keep services fair and equal across the County and as far as Redeemed, Inc., just as with any other grant, they were restricted to providing certain services and added she thought she was asking for assistance with families who have family members who are incarcerated, in addition to working with those families who are incarcerated. With the Organization of Learning and Human Development, that is another program that has been out there for almost 30 years. They have been doing community awareness bringing activities to the community and she hoped that they could consider putting in some money for them.

Commissioner Holt stated she had a couple of concerns and asked what kind of time frame were they looking at and what was needed?

Mr. Presnell said the budget needed to be finalized by September 10th.

Commissioner Holt asked about economic development and said they needed to consider increasing that and needed to look at how to entice businesses.

Mr. Presnell said at this point and time, the budget was balanced and they were looking at \$100,000 that would have to be found, cut something else, to be fund balanced. He added that the total budget for this year was \$4,663,420.

Commissioner Taylor asked if they could find \$1,500 each for Redeemed, Inc. and the Organization of Learning and Human Development.

Chair Croley said everyone was coming up with new areas of interest they would like to see funded and there had been a proposal that was refused and they needed to consider ways to save money and one was for the privatization of probation that would save approximately \$150,000. He asked that they reconsider.

Commissioner Taylor asked how practical was it when it would put 3 to 5 people out of work and then there would be their salaries plus benefits that would be gone and now lost revenue for the County because of the unemployment plus then having to pay Medicaid, indigent care for them, that was not practical.

Commissioner Holt said they needed to look at increasing Economic Development for the Council, not for the Chamber, there needed to be some marketing money there and would like \$20,000.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the Economic Council had agreed to buy into the program.

Mr. Presnell said there had been a meeting Tuesday and all the managers were committed to putting money in and also said everyone uses Jackson County as a model and they are at \$300,000/year.

Commissioner Morgan said when looking at Jackson County, it needed to be understood that they were willing to do more than we were and said that we needed to target specific entities and particular businesses that we would want to come to Gadsden County and we needed to be in a position to have something to offer to the businesses. He added that the thing that Jackson County has done well was to put themselves in a position now, but when they originally did that, they took a pretty severe hit with some of their tax abatement deals they had put together and they are still losing money on. Their BOCC was more easily approachable to do business with than ours and that is what we need to change in Gadsden County. He added that you not only have to look at what they chose to fund for economic development, you have to look at what they chose to NOT fund, they have more dirt roads than we do because they haven't chosen to invest in asphalt like we did years ago.

Chair Croley said one thing that everyone needed to appreciate, if you go into the U.S. Census and look at the 2012 economic data, you might be interested to learn, that we keep putting down Gadsden County, there might be certain segments of the population that might be unemployed but you have to look at if they are employable. He added if you start pulling up the interactive maps and pull up the North Florida and South Georgia counties, you start finding out that Gadsden

County's non-governmental payroll is higher than Jackson County. He further added that while we were smaller than Leon County, we were stronger than Wakulla, Madison or Jefferson County.

Commissioner Holt said one thing Jackson County did was planned well, they changed zoning.

Capital Outlay and Projects

Mr. Presnell said most of the Capital Outlay and projects were Board related projects and had to do with road projects and they were all resurfacing issues.

The list is as follows:

- Lake Yvette East \$290,000
- Lake Yvette West Road \$129,000
- Drake Acres Road \$153,000
- River Landing Road (Main) \$197,000
- River Landing Road (Secondary) \$126,000
- David Thomas Lane \$40,000
- M & M Lane \$27,000
- Cora Lewis Court \$13,000
- Willow Court \$2,000
- Mowers and tractors \$370,000 plus 4 staff \$110,000 = \$480,000
- Stripping of existing roads \$100,000

Chair Croley asked if he had any recommendations on the list.

Mr. Presnell said everyone knew the fund balance and they had to use \$400,000 to balance out the public works budget with no capital and that left them with \$1,107,000 in transportation reserves. He added if the Board could see it to spend maybe half of that amount; they would be in good shape.

Chair Croley asked what projects could be done for around \$600,000 and then mentioned cutting Lake Yvette East, River Landing secondary road and the mowers.

Commissioner Morgan encouraged them before making a decision and prioritizing which River Road to resurface, to discuss the matter with Chattahoochee's City Manager and the Board and get their input regarding same.

Commissioner Hinson asked that they look into the difference between lease and purchase of more tractors and if there would be any savings.

Mr. Presnell explained that on heavy equipment, there was not that much savings and there were hour restrictions on leased items and they could get into trouble with too many hours on the tractors.

Commissioner Taylor stated that concerning Lake Yvette, look into which side needed resurfacing more and regarding the tractors, she never agreed to spending that kind of money, they needed to look into other options and give privatization of mowing in one district a chance to see how well it worked. She also added that she appreciated the fact that the list included roads county-wide from

each district.

Commissioner Morgan stepped out at this juncture of the meeting.

Commissioner Morgan returned.

Commissioner Holt asked what they were doing for the jail; she thought it was the chiller.

Mr. Presnell explained that the low bid for the locks came in higher than they anticipated. He explained that they needed funds for the roof of the Sheriff's building and for a chiller and if it was one over the other, he had to take the roof. He said they had been looking for other facilities to move them to and if they decide to fix the roof, they would need to get the building from TCC.

Commissioner Morgan asked if he was asking the County to take ownership of the building and Mr. Presnell stated he was if they were going to put \$300,000-400,000 into it, but added if the Board chose not to take ownership of the building, they could still put a roof on it.

Commissioner Hinson said if that was the route, he would prefer to own it and suggested they should team up with the City and ask that they send a letter to TCC and the Superintendent that the County would like to own the building and have them transfer ownership of the building to us.

Mr. Presnell said if they chose to do one, the roof needed the attention because of mildew and mold issues and he needed the consensus of the Board to budget for the roof.

Commissioner Morgan asked if TCC had been made aware of problems with the building.

Mr. Collins stepped to the podium and informed the Board he had told them repeatedly about problems with the building and they had not offered to make any repairs. He added the County rented the building for \$1.00/year and TCC had no interest to do any maintenance.

Mr. Presnell said there were a number of other problems that needed to be addressed but they could handle those.

Chair Croley asked for a consensus to budget at this time for the repairs to the roof.

Commissioner Taylor asked for clarity if they were asking to take ownership back before they invest any money or if they were budgeting for the roof.

Chair Croley said they were asking to budget for the roof at this time.

Mr. Collins said the building had been remodeled once and eventually would need to be remodeled again and if they kept the building, there was a lot of space that could be utilized because the rooms were big.

Chair Croley said for the time being, to allow the Administrator to add the roof and chiller to the budget and then they would be in a position to do what was needed to be done.

Chair Croley stated the next item was budgeting for an ambulance crew to be placed in Midway.

Tommy Baker, EMS Director, appeared before the Board and informed them that approximately 85% of their calls were in the central area of the County and they have 2 ambulances based in Quincy and one located at the hospital, one in Havana, and one in Chattahoochee.

Chair Croley asked if a study had been done as to where stations needed to be in order to give the most effective service to the citizens.

Commissioner Hinson said most people in his district do not call the ambulance because the response time was too long; they go straight to the hospital in Tallahassee. He added there was \$5.1 Million in reserve and that needed to be used to save lives.

Chair Croley said he was not saying he didn't support this; he just wanted to explain where the needs were at to better serve the citizens.

Commissioner Holt stated she was not debating the issue with him, but the ambulance will go to nearest appropriate facility, it might be Tallahassee or it might be Quincy.

Chair Croley stated this was not a done deal, but a work in process for the budget and they needed to hear more information from EMS regarding the right way to handle the matter. Then when they have the next workshop, they should have direction.

Commissioner Morgan asked if the \$350,000 would be an additional annual cost and not a one-time expenditure and added that he had no problem in filling the need. He asked if they had taken the time to look into different ways to fulfill the need, were there any other options and that a lot of people had to learn to do things different from how it had been done in the past.

Mr. Presnell asked Mr. Baker to explain the total call run for the county.

Mr. Baker said they have 5 units on duty, they are running 23 calls a day on average, but he added the problem with saying "on average" was one day it might be 10, the next day be 40 calls. He further stated if a call came in from Chattahoochee and had to make a run to Tallahassee and back puts them out of service for 3½ hours, one call could put them out at least 1½ to 3½ hours, and that was significant and regardless of where the other unit goes, there was a need for another unit. He said they try to figure out the logistics all day long, who needs to go where, who needs to go to Tallahassee, who needs to go on the helicopter, who's coming back from Tallahassee. He added there was a supervisor on duty that delegates all of that throughout the day.

Chair Croley said it was information like that they needed to hear so they would know what the needs were.

Commissioner Morgan asked how many calls were necessary versus the ones that were not and Mr. Baker answered there was about 28-30% that was dry runs where no-one was transported to a facility.

Commissioner Taylor asked why six full time and 2 part time positions were needed.

Mr. Baker responded that there were always 2 people to staff an ambulance, an EMT and

paramedic on duty and there were 3 shifts.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there was currently an ambulance located in Midway or where it would come from.

Commissioner Taylor asked if there were costs to stock the ambulance with inventory, was insurance included in the amount

Mr. Baker said the County currently owns 10 ambulances, they were using 5 on a daily basis and they had 5 in reserve and they would use one of the reserves that was stocked and insured and the initial proposal was for it to be housed at the fire station in Midway.

Commissioner Taylor said she knew the need was there, but her concerns were how and where to find the funding year after year and they needed to look at the details.

Mr. Presnell said he needed clarification on the Senior Citizens Center and did the Commissioners want to continue the next workshop on August 22nd.

Commissioner Morgan said it was his opinion you couldn't fund one without funding the other, if there was \$15,000, share it between all of the centers.

ADJOURNMENT

THERE BEING NO OTHER ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR CROLEY ADJOURNED THE WORKSHOP AT 7:01 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

DOUGLAS M. CROLEY, Chair

ATTEST:

**Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk for
NICHOLAS THOMAS, CLERK**