

**AT A BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN
COUNTY, FLORIDA ON JUNE 2, 2022 AT 4:00 P.M., THE
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

Present: **Dr. Anthony “Dr. V” Viegbesie, Chair, District 2**
 Ronterious “Ron” Green, Vice Chair, District 5 - zoom
 Eric Hinson, District 1
 Kimblin NeSmith, District 3
 Brenda Holt, District 4
 Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator
 Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
 Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk
 Crystal Jimenez, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Viegbesie called the workshop to order at 4:12 p.m. He led to the invocation and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Mr. Dixon welcomed everyone to the budget workshop. He stated that they had a better fiscal year than last year. He said amendments will be made as they go through the budget workshop. This year they have had more time and opportunities to revisit things in the budget. He thanked the staff for their diligence. It has been a blunt less process. The American Rescue Plan still has about \$1.7 million in it. The CARES program has \$2.9 million, with a lot of it formally incumbered. He said they will meet with everyone individually to talk about their wishes and desires and their ability to pay.

Commissioner NeSmith asked how much of the CARES residuals is unincumbered? Ms. Daniels said \$1.7 million and another \$130 thousand is not incumbered.

Ms. Daniels said on June 1st the property appraiser gives them their preliminary taxable value which is why they are having this meeting to talk about the preliminary taxable values. She said she will go through some things related to the upcoming budget process and most of it is for informational purposes.

Chair Viegbesie asked if item 5 will be discussed later on? Ms. Daniel said that is correct.

Ms. Daniel went over the property taxes. The blue line is the taxable value for the current fiscal year, which was \$1.6 billion. The Millage rate was 9 mills, which generated about \$14 million in property tax revenue. At 95% it was \$14 million. They have included some information about what’s already been collected for this current fiscal year. Currently, they have collected about \$13 million. She said they have already paid the CRA payments. The amount collected after the CRA payments is about \$12 million. The green line is the fiscal year 2022-2023 taxable values from the property appraiser, which is \$1.788 billion. That is about a 9% increase. If they stay at 9 mills, they would generate about \$16 million, so, about \$1.3 million more than last year. At 95%, it drops to \$1.27 million. The orange lines are if they went to 9.25, 9.5 and 10. Page 2 is preliminary numbers. The auditors are still working on the draft for the year that ended on 9/30/2021. She went over the general fund. On October 1, 2021 it was \$5.4 million, if all things work out, they will end fiscal year 2021 at \$5.9 million. She wanted to

remind them that portions of that is restricted or assigned for some activities in the fall. The transportation fund is where the gas tax dollars go. The ending balance at October 1, 2020, was \$2.8 million, the ending balance at September 30, 2021 would be \$3.4 million. In the Building Inspection Fund, the beginning balance was \$266,000, the ending balance was \$320,000. The EMS Fund revenue was accounts receivable. The constitutional officers submit budgets as well. Everyone's budgets are due June 1st, except the tax collector. The Clerk of Court is asking for an increase of about \$54,000, due to increases in FRS and health insurance. The property appraiser's total budget has an increase of about \$188,000. They have not received Sheriff Department's budget yet. The Supervisor of Elections is asking for a replacement of a vehicle and needs a bilingual person, they are asking for \$16,000.

Commissioner Green asked for the Clerk of Court increase amount. Ms. Daniels said it is \$54,000. It is increasing FRS and Health Insurance.

Ms. Daniels said the tax collectors' budget is due August 1st.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if the information can be posted for Commissioner Green and Commissioner Hinson?

Ms. Daniels said the other item is non-profits. In previous budgets there was a non-profit human services aspect of the budget where there would be applications and they would apply and the Board would set aside monies directly for those non-profit agencies. They didn't do it the past couple of years, only to the Boys & Girls Club. That is currently budgeted about \$96,000 that they give to them on an annual basis. Due to the money of the CARES Act that went to small businesses, they had money from the American Rescue Plan that went to small businesses and non-profits and they did not address that in the budget. They did set aside a reserve for about \$41,000. They need some dialogue on what to do with non-profit agencies. She said they will be having another workshop for June 16th.

Commissioner NeSmith asked if there are procedures already in place for the non-profit?

Commissioner Holt said she was following a plan that they were using in Tallahassee where they set aside a certain amount of money. There is a committee that looks at that amount of money and the people would apply to that committee. That way, there won't be a fight between commissioners. Everyone will be able to get some funding.

Commissioner Nesmith asked Commissioner Holt if there's a structure? Commissioner Holt said it's been a while ago but during that time, yes, that's what they were doing. They set up a group with the applicants. Commissioner Nesmith said there should be a record of that committee? Commissioner Holt said they don't have it. Ms. Daniels said from her understanding they did not have that in place. They were looking at going towards that model.

Chair Viegbesie said he was a part of the committee. It was organized by United Way of the Big Bend. He said it included members from the Big Bend community that would travel to each facility that are requesting funding to look at their conditions. So, the funds come out of the committee, not out the Board of County Commissioners.

Ms. Daniel said the Property Appraiser is here to discuss his budget request for fiscal year 2022-2023.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Clerk of Court

Property Appraiser-Reginald Cunningham

Mr. Cunningham stated that he was glad Ms. Daniels gave the breakdown of the millage rate because it is important. He said they will send letters out to people about their property values and what created the market value change. He said there were a lot of sales in our area. He said the sales are coming in hot. Over the years, the values have not changed much. He said the Department of Revenue reached out to him last year and said his tax goal was not passed. This year their sales have changed tremendously. It does not affect the homestead people; it will hurt the people who have the lower properties. Their letter will inform them that the millage rate has increased. The property appraiser's office is asking for an increase of about \$100,000 due to vehicles. He said they have 4 Nissan Frontiers, when the lease is up, they won't be able to get another vehicle for another 6 months, so they extended their lease. It is \$77,000 just to purchase the vehicles. In the budget, they included the 3% increase of staff, that's an additional \$20,000. He said with the retirement of the GIS person, they transitioned a young lady and are trying to get her trained. It is another \$10,000-\$15,000 increase just for training. He said they need the GIS because it controls the map on their website.

Chair Viegbesie asked if the GIS could be something other departments can use or they need to go to the property appraiser's office to get access to that service? Mr. Dixon asked Mr. Steel.

Justin Steel said they do have GIS services in the planning and zoning. GIS is very extensive and requires a very dedicated person to do the job. Currently, they use an outside source, the ARPC for larger projects. Mr. Dixon asked if it would be an asset to him if it is in his (Property Appraiser) office? Chair Viegbesie said the question is how to get most effective service for that budgetary item? Where can they house that expertise that will make it accessible to every department within the county government that would want to use it? Mr. Steel said a dedicated GIS person would be more ideal. Chair Viegbesie suggests to have a person dedicated to it as a county employee, not just dedicated to a certain department.

Commissioner Hinson entered at 4:52 p.m.

Commissioner Holt said GIS service needs to be at both locations to be more productive. They need one at Planning and Zoning and they need one at the Property Appraisers office. They need to train two people and get them where they need to be. She is all for what the training takes. She says they also need another planner.

Commissioner Green asked for the estimated cost for a GIS system. Mr. Cunningham said they already have the system in place, it is getting someone trained that will cost.

Commissioner Holt asked for the people that are homestead, they will not be affected? Mr. Cunningham said not more than 3%. Commissioner Holt asked if there is anyone that would not be affected? Mr. Cunningham said a small percentage of people. He said they are looking at commercial sales right now. Commissioner Holt thinks they need to have some time to go through this with them and the public. The minimum is 3% increase for homestead.

Commissioner Holt said they need more time to explain this to the community. She said they will need a workshop to let everyone know.

Commissioner Nesmith asked Mr. Cunningham, the GIS is software? Mr. Cunningham said yes, a mapping software. Commissioner Nesmith asked if they have had a staff person to maximize using it? Mr. Cunningham said they never had a staff person to maximize it, they just had a person to use it. This is the first time he has a young lady that is interested in maximizing it. She just needs to be trained more. Commissioner Nesmith said there are benefits to maximize it. Mr. Cunningham said it helps for when they are trying to figure out maps. Commissioner Nesmith asked how long is the training? Mr. Cunningham said it is with Thomas University. It is only two classes in-house, which is what costs them money. Commissioner Nesmith asked what percentage increase between sales from last year to this year? Mr. Cunningham said about 45% increase.

Chair Viegbesie said Commissioner Holt's suggestion is something they should consider. The citizens should know why property taxes have gone up.

Commissioner Holt stated she wants to make sure they are getting monies in. If they need advertising for positions they can't get, they need to raise the amount they are offering. She said these are needs, not wants and you can't progress unless you have the equipment, technology and people in place to do it. She said after seeing the mass murders in Texas, she talked to two people in law enforcement. She said those officers cannot hear what those children are saying when they call 911. She said there has to be a disconnect and later found out that they had different radio systems. She asked how ours work and part of the program with the school board is different. She said they need to make sure when they call from a school, they get who they need to get. Gadsden High doesn't have law enforcement on campus.

Chair Viegbesie said that was an issue in Leon County, which is why they came up with dispatch consolidation.

Commissioner Holt said the schools and school buses should have a panic button.

Chair Viegbesie said this is work in progress and the next workshop is June 16th. By then, they should have a more robust document to work with.

Ms. Daniels stated another thing they could be thinking about, which is the \$15 minimum wage increase that they are mandated to do. They are looking at working at it incrementally, they have already brought everyone to \$10 per hour.

Commissioner NeSmith asked what's the start date for \$15 per hour. Ms. Daniels said by 2026. Mr. Dixon said they are starting to feel the pains now. It is not something they can wait to address. He said it is not only at the bottom, it creates compression. They have to handle it strategically.

Commissioner Hinson asked how much does it take for them to get to \$15 an hour. Ms. Daniels said they are looking at it now. Commissioner Hinson asked if they could have the number in the

next meeting? Chair Viegbesie said it is something they need to look at because attrition is an issue.

Commissioner Holt said if you can't recruit your people, that lets you know that something all the way down that's the problem. They will need to look at the whole salary scale. She said how will they use the funds to make it effective.

Commissioner Hinson said the price of gas is almost \$5. Everything is going up and it is something they need to look into. The County offered free insurance last year.

Mr. Dixon agrees with Commissioner Hinson and stated it is not just money; they have created a great work environment. People enjoy working for the County. There are no better benefits at any agency than at Gadsden County. He said they need to recognize that custodial workers are special people doing a special job. They can't lose EMS personnel either.

Commissioner NeSmith echoed Mr. Dixon in regards to the atmosphere they have created County wide. There is good will all over the county. He said he's sure all of the commissioners have had the opportunity to see the article regarding where they are when it comes to small businesses. They are 3rd in the state according to Smart Asset. He said they have to stay competitive. The board talked extensively last year about needing Revenue to meet expectations.

Commissioner Green thanked Ms. Daniel for bringing up the conversation to make \$15 an hour as minimum wage.

Commissioner Hinson appreciates Ms. Daniel as well. He says there's a huge disconnect between someone who makes \$8-\$9 to someone who has worked 40 years and has been given a lot of increases to get where they are. He personally thinks everyone should get more. Some people make so low and the person next to them is making \$30 or \$40 an hour doing the same work. He said we are in a major conundrum and everyone else is moving but we are paralyzed. The only thing keeping them afloat is their insurance. The pay is so low compared to everyone else and this needs to be addressed this year.

Chair Viegbesie said all 5 commissioners stated it is a priority to talk about the pay scale. They need to see how the compression can be dealt with.

Sheriff

Supervisor of Elections

Tax Collector – Due August 1st

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Financial Outlook for FY22-23**
- 2. Fund Balance/Reserve**

3. Non-Profits

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRIORITIES AND DIRECTION

MOTION TO ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR VIEGBESIE DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:27 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**RONTERIOUS GREEN, Chair
Board of County Commissioners**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk