

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COUNTY MANAGER
2014**

- **The Annual Report is required under Section 3.3 (2) of the Home Rule Charter for Columbia County.**

FY 2013-2014 RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

- Columbia County has identified the lack of a designated funding source for road construction and resurfacing to be a major issue. It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners meet in a workshop session to discuss alternatives.

UPDATE: The Board of County Commissioners met in several workshops in which designated road funding was discussed; however, no decisions on a funding source were reached.

- Due to flooding from Tropical Storm Debby, requests for retention pond repair and retention pond maintenance have increased dramatically. The number of retention ponds under private ownership are the greatest issue. The Board of County Commissioners, by law is not allowed to maintain private property. Policy should be developed, reviewed and adopted regarding the maintenance of privately owned retention ponds.

UPDATE: This recommendation was accepted and now has been fully implemented. Private property owners have the choice to utilize a “Stormwater Non-Advalorem Assessment” for private retention pond maintenance.

- In the current fiscal year, the Board has addressed “office/space” needs on a temporary basis. In addition, the Board has authorized a “Space Needs Study” to assist with developing permanent strategies. The “Space Needs Study” should be used to develop a strategy for meeting the long term needs of the county as it relates to office and space assignments. The strategy should be complete in time for FY 2014-2015 budget consideration.

UPDATE: The “Space Needs Study” was completed. Due to the current favorable lease rates; it was recommended that the leases be extended. This is complete.

- A workshop should be scheduled to discuss major capital needs, including, but not limited to:

- 1.) Automobile Crime Scene Processing Building
- 2.) Development of the North Florida Intermodal Park (RACEC site)
- 3.) Industrial Site(s) Development as Recommended by the Economic Development Department
- 4.) 800 Mhz Radio System – Countywide
- 5.) Detention Center Replacement.

UPDATE: Workshops were held and all of the listed capital needs were discussed. Recommendations will impact the FY 15-16 budget.

- Due to the expected use of all Library Equalization Fund Reserves in FY 2013-2014, a strategy needs to be developed regarding the funding of library services for FY 2014 - 2015 and beyond.

UPDATE: The county was unable to develop a permanent funding strategy for libraries. FY 14-15 Library funding will require continued reserve funding or severe cuts in operating expenses.

- Columbia County should continue to find ways to benefit the Ellisville interchange. Removal of dilapidated buildings, sign regulations and the expansion of water and sewer utilities are needed. The county is currently working with the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding interchange landscaping and street lighting.

UPDATE: Water and sewer improvements are scheduled. Interlocal agreements with DOT have not been pursued. The Ellisville interchange continues to be a project.

- As part of the overall county recreation assessment; the Board of County Commissioners should decide if additional acreage for recreation expansion is needed, and if so, identify amount and location. Funding should be considered in FY 2014 - 2015.

UPDATE: Funding for additional recreation funding will be an “option” for funding consideration in FY 14-15.

- The Bascom Norris Connector Road Project should be completed the first quarter of 2014. Columbia County has initiated the effort to partner with the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) to enhance traffic circulation in the vicinity of the Bascom Norris Connector and U.S. 90. Columbia County should implement improvements suggested by DOT to assist them in this effort.

UPDATE: Columbia County and the Florida Department of Transportation are actively pursuing related projects. The projects include the extension of Real Terrace and improvements to Bascom Norris between Lowe's and U.S.90.

- Columbia County is in the process of hiring an Assistant County Manager. In addition to performing administrative manager duties, the individual selected will be trained to assume the duties of County Manager. For this reason, it is important that the Board of County Commissioners participate in the selection of the Assistant County Manager. It is also recommended that the Board take an active role in evaluating the performance of the selected individual.

UPDATE: This recommendation was approved by the Board and the process is complete.

- A number of county policies are in need of review. In addition, new policy would appear to be beneficial in a number of areas. Policy review/development is recommended in the following areas:
 - 1.) Leave –The goal would be to create a leave policy that accomplishes three (3) goals:
 - a) creates an employee incentive
 - b) reduces abuse, and
 - c) reduces the county's uncompensated absences liability.
 - 2.) Safety – The goal would be to strengthen the current policy in order to impact Workers Compensation mod rates.
 - 3.) Merit Pay/Merit Bonuses – Requested by the Board of County Commissioners.
 - 4.) Private Road Maintenance – The goal would be to create a standard that could be used in levying a non advalorem assessment to accept private roads.
 - 5.) Public Building(s) Signage Policy – Adopt standards for the type of signage to be erected at buildings under the control of the Board of County Commissioners. The intent is to standardize signage and to create an identity based on building use.
 - 6.) Right-of-Way Acquisition Policy – The objective would be to streamline the process in order to save time and reduce costs (appraisal and legal expenses).

UPDATE: All policy recommendations were discussed in workshops. Policies No. 4 and 6 have been completed. Other policies continue to be discussed.

FY 2012-2013 FINANCIAL REVIEW

- **The audit for the period ending September 30, 2013 is complete.**
- **No major findings were noted in the audit and forecasted expenditures for the period did not exceed the budget. Total county indebtedness decreased.**

FY 2013-2014 FINANCIAL REVIEW

- **FY 2013-2014 began with \$650,000 in additional advalorem revenue over the previous year. No new taxes were adopted. The adopted millage levy represented a .63% reduction. No other fees or assessments were increased.**

FY 2014-2015 BUDGET ISSUES

- **County reserves are a concern. Revenue reductions have limited the county in its ability to “replace” spent reserves.**
- **Columbia County does not have an identified revenue source for road improvement projects. Fund balance can/will be appropriated for road projects during FY 2014 – 2015. Staff advises that roads in need of resurfacing have become an issue. The use of fund balance for road projects will continue to deplete county reserves.**
- **State Aid to Libraries (Equalization) fund balance was completely expended in FY 2013-2014. An increase in revenue or a decrease in expenditures will be requested to maintain the current level of service.**
- **Insurance and retirement costs are expected to increase.**
- **Constitutional offices will require enhanced funding. The largest increase will be the office of the Sheriff.**
- **A need exists to provide a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for county employees. Employee classifications with high turnover / high training costs should be identified and reviewed. Specialized pay plans should be adopted to counter employee turnover.**
- **Create an “Equipment Replacement Plan” for technology.**
- **Find a mechanism to fund necessary communication and detention center needs.**

2014 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Disparity in Medicaid County Cost Share Formula – This will be considered in the 2015 legislative session.

Funding for programs important to Small Counties and Rural – All major small county programs and revenue sharing were maintained or increased.

Fiscally Constrained County Offset Funding – All fiscally constrained funding components were appropriated.

Funding for Small County Road Programs – Funding for SCRAP and SCOP for 2014-15 will increase from \$66.8 million to \$109 million.

Rural Health Care – Health Departments funded; Telemedicine proposals did not pass.

Florida Retirement System – Proposals to restructure FRS did not pass.

Small County Solid Waste Program Funding – Small County Solid Waste Grants are funded at \$3.0 million to be divided equally amongst the counties with a population of 100,000 or less.

Rural Job Creation and Protection of Rural Economic Base – RACEC name changed to Rural Area of Opportunity.

Unfunded Cost Shifts – An effort to increase local Article V costs was defeated and the Springs Protection Legislation also included numerous cost impacts that were not funded. The Springs bill did not pass. The Effort to reduce local Communications Services Tax revenue did occur and there was no significant unfunded mandate approved.

Rural Water Resources – Springs legislation focused on regulation and springs protection but did not provide assurance of funding that was needed to meet legislative requirements. The legislation did not pass. Significant funding was provided for water body restoration.

Communication Services Tax – there was no reduction in CST revenue to the local governments.

Sovereign Immunity Limits – there was not change to existing Sovereign Immunity Limits and the current claims process.

Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) – all PILT programs were funded.

FY 2014 – 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to schedule multiple budget workshops. These workshops have proven effective by allowing multiple opportunities to discuss issues of importance.
- Continue discussions to find solutions for the following ongoing budget issues:
 - 1.) Library Funding
 - 2.) Road Improvements
 - 3.) P25 (800 mhz) Communication System
 - 4.) Repair/Replacement – Columbia County Detention Center
- Develop a strategy to address budget requests from Constitutional Officers. The Board of County Commissioners and the Constitutional Officers are often in disagreement regarding budget priorities.
- Continue to pursue improvements for the U.S. 41/I-75 Interchange at Ellisville.
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