

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COUNTY MANAGER
2011**

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

2010-2011 RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

- **Approve the installation of internet based (VOip) phones. Assuming the county pays for the equipment in advance, immediate monthly reductions in phone costs are realized. In addition, the aging county phone system is replaced.**
- **The Board of County Commissioners approved the purchase and use of internet based (VOip) phones. The contracted price for equipment, training and service was \$424,024.24. As of July, 2011 the conversion to VOip phones was not complete. Departments yet to be converted include the Supervisor of Elections, Tax Collector and the Columbia County Health Department. All external lines can not be eliminated until all phones have been converted; therefore, expected savings can not be fully realized.**
- **Do not accept the ARRA grant for the new Eastside Fire Department. The grant is for approximately \$630,000. The total project is estimated at \$1.1 million and will require compliance with LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards. If constructed to LEED standards, the building will require annual certifications to verify continued compliance. Construct the new Eastside Fire Department using the same basic floor plan as Deep Creek, Suwannee Valley/Winfield, Columbia City and Ellisville departments. The project will be paid from the county portion of the original project.**
- **The Board of County Commissioners rejected the ARRA Grant, as recommended, for the new Eastside Fire Department. At this time, plans to construct a new department have been tabled.**
- **No later than July 1, 2011 the Board of County Commissioners shall appoint a Charter Review Commission to review the Columbia County Charter. The Charter Review Commission has one year to present its recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The recommendations will be scheduled for referendum in the 2012 general election. The Board of County Commissioners should begin to consider how it intends to appoint Charter Review Commission members and issues that the Board of County**

Commissioners desires to present to the Charter Review Commission in its own behalf.

- **In accordance with the Home Rule Charter for Columbia County, Florida, the Board of County Commissioners has appointed a Charter Review Commission. The Commission has met and organized.**
- **Florida Department of Environmental certification of the Winfield Solid Waste Facility Class III expansion is in progress. Based on capacity, it is time to authorize permitting for an expansion to the Class I facility. The estimated engineering/permitting cost is \$550,000. This expense will be paid from the Winfield Solid Waste Facility reserve.**
- **The expansion of the Class III facility at the Winfield Solid Waste Facility is complete. The expansion has been certified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Class I permitting was “delayed” in order to coordinate expansion with the permit renewal for the current facility. The target date for both is now the Spring of 2012.**
- **The bid for solid waste collection (residential and commercial) expires September 30, 2011. The Board of County Commissioners has the option to rebid the contract or renew the contract for an additional five years. The Board of County Commissioners should decide which option it wishes to choose by March, 2011. This will allow time to prepare and bid the service if necessary.**
- **Columbia County opted to bid solid waste collection (residential and commercial) in lieu of extending the current solid waste collection agreement. A new provider, Veolia, was determined to be the lowest, most responsive bidder. Veolia will begin to provide service in October 1, 2011.**
- **Due to the construction of a new Class I cell at Winfield, the bid or extension of the solid waste collection agreement and the amount of time elapsed since the solid waste non advalorem assessment has been reviewed, it is advised to approve a non advalorem rate study to be completed prior to establishing maximum non advalorem assessment rates for the 2011 tax bill. It is also advised to include the fire assessment.**
- **Due to the solid waste collection bids resulting in a cost decrease (\$564,962.22 in reduced residential costs); the necessity to complete a non advalorem study was negated. Staff is of the opinion that the savings generated will be sufficient to offset increased operational and expansion cost related to the operation of the Winfield Solid Waste Facility.**

- **Columbia County should schedule a workshop to review county wide fire coverage areas, ISO ratings, ISO changes and changes to the delivery of service, if any.**
- **The Board of County Commissioners discussed current ISO (Insurance Service Organization) ratings and proposed changes within the industry that would affect future ISO ratings. As a result, the county retained National Fire Consultants to review current county operations and evaluate future needs to meet proposed ISO changes. The results of the survey are as follows:**

- 1.) **add four (4) single bay stations (no personnel, Class A type engine only) - \$120,000**
- 2.) **purchase three (3) Class A pumpers to equip above stations (1 available) - \$1,050,000**

The Board of County Commissioners will need to decide whether the above enhancements are necessary prior to approving a new non advalorem assessment rate study for fire suppression.

- **Columbia County should purchase (GSA contract) a document management system (electronic record storage). It is estimated that such a system could be purchased for approximately \$95,000. This estimate includes all necessary equipment and software for digital and paper records management. Individual scanners (for each department) have not been included. After the first year, annual maintenance would be \$6,800. The price includes training. Temporary personnel would be hired to scan and store existing records.**
- **A document management system (electronic record storage) was not purchased due to budget constraints. The estimated cost was \$95,000. Not budgeting for the purchase has resulted in the opportunity to provide for the need through less costly options. Online file storage that provides for unlimited files and storage space is now available. This option is available for an estimated \$6,000 annually. This cost does not include that cost of individual department scanners.**
- **As requested by the Board of County Commissioners, an asbestos/lead paint survey has been performed on the Montgomery Building. It is recommended that the Board develop a plan to upgrade and utilize the property.**
- **An asbestos/lead paint survey was completed on the Montgomery Building. The survey confirmed the presence of both. No corrective action plan has been adopted.**

- **The Board of County Commissioners should schedule a strategic planning workshop. The workshop should include a review of last year's plan, amendments, if any and additions. It is also recommended that a portion of the strategic planning workshop include Constitutional Officers.**
- **The Board of County Commissioners did not schedule a strategic planning workshop; however, the Board participated in the budget review process allowing for Board comment and concern. Constitutional Officers were invited to participate.**
- **It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners meet with the Industrial Development Authority to discuss the tax abatement referendum scheduled for November, 2010. Prior tax abatement/economic subsidies are currently in review for compliance.**
- **Tax abatement continuation was approved by referendum in November, 2010. The review of prior tax abatement/economic subsidies was completed. The review resulted in several changes including the use of tax abatements in lieu of tax rebates and reconfiguring the duties of the Industrial Development Authority.**

FY 2009-2010 FINANCIAL REVIEW

- **The audit for the period ending September 30, 2010 is complete.**
- **No major findings were noted in the audit and forecasted expenditures for the period were within budget. Total county indebtedness decreased and the county's ending reserve balance increased. The increase in the ending reserve balance is primarily due to the fact that the county received additional funding through Amendment 1 Revenue Sharing and reducing budgeted expenditures.**

FY 2010-2011 FINANCIAL REVIEW

- **FY 2010-2011 began with \$2,130,000 less revenue than the previous year. No new taxes were adopted.**

FY 2011-2012 BUDGET ISSUES

- **County reserves are a concern. Revenue reductions have limited the county in its ability to “replace” spent reserves.**
- **The county is expecting a decline in property tax revenue. This is due to the adjustment of taxable value due to declining market rates. The estimated loss of revenue from declining property tax values is \$1,200,000.**
- **Columbia County’s 24/7 operations (fire, 9-1-1) will require an estimated \$50,000 in annual overtime. This is due to a maturing staff (employees have enough longevity to earn full leave benefits).**
- **It is expected that Columbia County will spend \$3,000,000 to acquire the necessary right-of-way to complete the Bascom Norris Connector Road Project. This expense has not been budgeted. The construction expenses have been budgeted.**
- **Final connection requirements and final rates have been adopted for the Ellisville Utility. Based upon the work of the Columbia County Utility Committee, this fund will require a subsidy. The subsidy is \$300,000 annually.**
- **Columbia County does not have an identified revenue source for road improvement projects. It is not likely that any fund balance can/will be appropriated for road projects during FY 2011 – 2012. Staff advises that roads in need of resurfacing have become an issue.**
- **The Columbia County Building and Zoning Department is generating approximately one-half the revenue needed to fund the Department. Significant reductions were made in this Department during FY 2009 – 2010. This Department has a minimum staffing requirement.**
- **State Aid to Libraries (Equalization) funding will be decreased from \$486,590 to \$237,736.**

2011 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

- **HJR 381 passed both chambers and will be placed on the November 2012 general election ballot for consideration as a constitutional amendment. The bill reduces the constitutionally mandated non-homestead cap from 10% to 5%.The amendment to the State Constitution would: Authorize the Legislature to prohibit increases in assessed value of homestead & specified non-homestead property if just value of property decreases; Reduce the limitation on annual assessment increases applicable to non-homestead real property from 10% to 5%; Provide an additional homestead exemption for owners of homestead property who have not owned homestead property for a specified time (three years) before purchase and would be effective January 2013 if passed.**
- **SB 224 was passed. This bill makes the following changes to local government guidelines: revises provisions relating to procedures for declaring special districts inactive; specifies the level of detail required for local government entity's proposed budget; revises provisions for local governmental entity's audit & annual financial reports; requires local governmental entity's budget to be posted online, and revises budgetary guidelines for district school boards.**
- **SB 2100 passed. The final retirement package requires state and county employees to contribute 3 percent of their pre-tax salaries into the Florida Retirement System.**
- **HB 1355 passed. The bill has implications for elections reform. The impacts to counties and supervisor of elections include the decrease in days available for early voting from 15 to 10 days prior to election. One outstanding issue is whether elections equipment will be able to print the entire ballot to include underline and strike-through for additions and deletions.**
- **SB1128 was passed. A provision of this bill requires the creation of the Task Force on Public Employee Disability Presumptions to issue recommendations on disability presumptions for law enforcement, fire fighters and correctional officers. Members of the Task Force shall be appointed prior to July 15, 2011 and the first meeting shall be held prior to August 15, 2011. The Florida Association of Counties is one of the members to be appointed by the President of the Senate. Recommendations must be provided prior to the 2012 legislative session.**
- **HB 7223 passed. The legislation extends the public records exemptions for public records associated with competitive solicitations, invitations to negotiate and requests for proposals. It also extends the public meetings**

exemption to include any portion of a meeting in which a vendor makes a presentation as it relates to a competitive solicitation and any team strategy sessions as a result of the presentation.

- **SB 170 passed. This bill requires State Attorneys and Public Defenders to electronically file court documents with the clerk of courts. FAC amended the bill to require the use of the recently developed Florida Courts E-portal to minimize the request for funding that would potentially duplicate existing technology.**

- **HB 7207 represents the most significant change to the state’s growth management laws in the last 25 years. While the 2005 legislature created more stringent compliance measures for local governments, this bill eliminates most of those and more. While this bill includes more than 75 sections, the following represents some of the more significant measures for county governments:**
 - (a) **Renames the Alternative State Review Process as the “Expedited Review Process” and requires all local governments to process plan amendments under this format;**
 - (b) **Eliminates transportation, schools, and parks and recreation concurrency as a state requirement but allows local governments to retain these by local option;**
 - (c) **Eliminates the twice per year limit on plan amendments;**
 - (d) **Eliminates the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process but still requires counties to review their plans every 7 years and to amend them if necessary;**
 - (e) **Eliminates the definition of financial feasibility and the state’s review requirement for annual updates of the Capital Improvements Element (CIE);**
 - (f) **Eliminates the term Dense Urban Land Area (DULA) but retains the core definition for purposes of exempting Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) in areas that meet the definition;**
 - (g) **Repeals Rule 9J-5 and places certain standards in statute;**
 - (h) **State agencies can only comment on state resources under their respective jurisdictions;**
 - (i) **Makes permanent the Optional Sector Planning Process and increases the minimum acreage threshold to 15,000 acres; and**
 - (j) **Eliminates the Century Commission effective July 2013.**

- **SB 2156 creates a new Department of Economic Opportunity and, among its provisions, transfers the Division of Community Planning and the Division of Housing and Community Development to the new agency. The new department is designed to provide coordination among state programs related to economic development, workforce development, community planning and development, and affordable housing. It creates a Division of Community Planning and Development, which will be responsible for**

reviewing local plan amendments, and designates the new department as the State Land Planning Agency. The bill also permanently moves the Division of Emergency Management under the Executive Office of the Governor, transfers the Florida Building Commission to the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, and places the Florida Communities Trust Program at the Department of Environmental Protection.

2011-2012 Recommendations

- **Columbia County should retain an engineer as a full time employee. The position would answer to the Public Works Director and perform all duties as currently performed by the contracted County Engineer.**
- **Ichetucknee Springs benefits from the support of two groups, The Ichetucknee Partnership and The Ichetucknee Springs Water Quality Working Group. Due to state revenue reductions, both groups have lost their funding. Columbia County should consider financial assistance to the extent the core services (education and outreach) of the Ichetucknee Partnership are maintained.**
- **Create a program similar to a Community Redevelopment/Tax Increment Fund for the Ellisville interchange. The “fund” would receive monies each year based on the amount of growth and redevelopment which occurs in the target area. The use of the funds would be controlled by the Board of County Commissioners.**
- **Authorize renovation of the Montgomery Building. The lead paint/asbestos survey is complete. Assuming the renovated building would be used to house the Columbia County Economic Development Department and the Columbia County Tourist Development Council, potential revenue sources would include contingency funds of the EDD and TDC. The project would also qualify for financial assistance from the Tax Increment Fund of the City of Lake City.**
- **The Columbia County Tourist Development Council appointed a fact finding committee to analyze the potential economic impact of an “Events Center” and enhanced recreational facilities on the local economy. Due to fiscal constraints, the TDC has decided to concentrate on recreation enhancement.**

The Board of County Commissioners should authorize the appointment of a committee to continue the work of the TDC. The facts as determined by the TDC committee would indicate possible revenue opportunities for the county. The committee should include appointees from Community Resources, Inc.

- **Due to the size and scope of county government today, departmental reorganization is required. All county departments will be placed in 1 of 3 divisions. These divisions are:**

- 1.) General Government**
- 2.) Public Safety**
- 3.) Public Works (Operations)**

Each division will be supervised by a Director who answers to the County Manager. The current system providing that all departments answer directly to the County Manager has worked well in the past; however, expected changes in how government services will be delivered, the types of services provided and population indicate change is needed.