

Columbia County Board of County Commissioners

Minutes of
August 27, 2008

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners met in a scheduled meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the School Board Administrative Office.

IN ATTENDANCE:

County Commissioners

Dewey Weaver, Stephen Bailey, Ronald Williams, and George Skinner.
The position of District 5 County Commissioner remains vacant at this time.

County Administration

County Manager Dale Williams, County Attorney Marlin Feagle, Deputy Clerk Sandy Markham.

The **Annual Reports** of the County Manager for 07/08 were presented by County Manager Dale Williams.

County Manager Williams gave an overview of the budget process and the legal requirements of the budget. Highlights:

The Tentative Budget for the year ending September 30, 2009 was reviewed by the County Manager. Some of the highlights were:

- Amendment 1 has been fully implemented, which resulted in a reduction of property tax revenue. This coming year the county will have a millage increase, but a revenue decrease.
- The proposed budget requires no increase in non-Ad Valorem Assessments for fire and solid waste.
- There is no money set aside for the new jail and associated costs.
- Operating costs were increased throughout the budget, primarily due to the increase in fuel costs.
- The budget provides a \$2,000 net bonus for all county employees. This will be the last year the county will be able to give this type of bonus. Pay raises for next year may or may not be possible.
- There are five (5) salary adjustments. They are: Parks and Landscape Director, Administrative Secretary, Maintenance Tech III, and (2) Maintenance Tech I positions. Collectively, these adjustments are less than \$25,000.
- Recommendation to issue a new revenue/bond of \$9,300,000. This will generate sufficient monies to pave Old Wire Road and Old Herlong Road. This project will also be possible because of the extension on the 2 cents local option gas tax.
- The sum of \$2,000,000 was placed in the budget to address some of the existing jail conditions.

- The total proposed budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year is \$99,592,241. The current year's total budget was \$87,393,540. The differences in the money is related to capital projects.
- Approximately 35% of property values are not on the tax rolls. This is a lower number than in years past. The County Manager reviewed the exemptions.
- Revenue distribution was reviewed.
- Revenue reductions from the current year to next year will be approximately \$3,000,000. Last years reductions were just over \$2,000,000.
- The budget being currently presented assumes less revenue than the state estimates.
- Millage has been slightly increased, but revenue is reduced.
- Library revenue is down due to state budget cuts.
- Recreation fees have been added to this budget. The Annie Maddox/Richardson portion has not been broken down, but it will be available before the second hearing.
- Interest earnings are greatly reduced due to the economic down-turn.
- The Board approved an amendment to the Agreement with the Suwannee Water Management District to set aside \$1,000,000 00 each to provide for stormwater issues. This agreement will negate the requirement for one year.
- Total appropriations are considerably less than last year.

Transportation Trust

- The county has had to add significant revenues to Public Works in order to balance this budget. As these revenues decrease, the county must pull from other revenues to supplant.
- The fiscally constrained county money is based on a formula. All of that money is placed into the budget of Public Works.
- The estimated beginning cash is too much cash considering the total budget. Some of this money will be placed in the Road Improvement Fund.
- There is a significant fuel increase added in. For the most part it is diesel.
- \$2,000,000 was transferred into the Road Improvement Fund.

Other

- There is no juvenile justice revenue and expenditures as the state is funding through a grant.
- Fines and forfeitures \$2 surcharge is collected by the Clerk of Courts, which is the money the Board be applied to the court systems technology expenses. Since this revenue amount has decreased, the amounts allocated for the State Attorney, Public Defender, and Court Administration has also been decreased. The Board voiced that they desired no adjustment and that these agencies should live within the revenue stream.
- Class I solid waste revenues are up and that is partially due to the fact that the City of Lake City is now transporting their waste to the County's landfill.
- A contamination assessment plan will likely be needed at the landfill in the next 12 – 18 months. Money has been budgeted to pay for an engineer should that become necessary.

- There is money in the budget to help with refurbishment of the libraries. It cannot be used on new construction.

Tourist Development Fund

- Library rent has been pulled for the upcoming year because the TDC will not own the building beginning next fiscal year as the county will purchase the Welcome Center Facility by assuming the remainder of the debt. There will be monies transferred from the TDC's Debt Service Reserve into the TDC for upgrading the I-75 message writing sign.
- When the county purchases the TDC building, the funds will transfer from debt service to operating.

IDA

- This is a millage based budget.
- There is no money in this budget to purchase property, pay for mitigation, etc.
- The proposed budget has no money to fund another project the scale of the Target Project.
- Commissioner Williams suggested slightly raising the millage rate next year for the purpose of generating funds to be used on economic development projects.

Economic Development Fund

- Tax rebates: When Target pays Columbia County taxes, the Board of County Commissioners abates them. The ad valorem received is refunded. Currently on the books for abatement is New Millennium and Target.

Road Improvement Debt Service Fund

- The county's 2002 Road Improvement Debt Service Bond will pay off this year. After the first of the year, staff will propose doing another loan/bond and utilizing the revenues to generate \$9,300,000 to assist in road improvement.
- The county is proposing for FY 08/09 all projects not completed last year and \$11,000,000 in new projects, which are: Old Wire and Herlong Roads, CR 135, CR 778, Junction Road, Centerville Road, King Road, Nash Road, Tommy Light Road and Walter Little Road.

The commissioners expressed concern with the number of roads needing attention in the county. Answering a question from Commissioner Bailey, the County Manager said that there is a listing of all roads needing repair and the estimated cost. The roads are ranked "by the way" they were received. Commissioner Bailey asked the County Manager to have the county engineer, in the near future, to go through the list of roads and prioritize them on a county-wide basis in order of importance. Commissioner Bailey said that this will help commissioners to know the status of their roads compared to others and that it will make it easier for commissioners to answer questions from their constituents regarding the roads. Commissioner Weaver said that Commissioner Bailey's idea is a good one, but

since there is no formula and no idea how much money will be available for paving, it would be a difficult task.

The County Manager said that County Engineer Ralph Hardee is working on a road inventory, which will include mapping the road, reviewing the road signage, and does a comparison to D.O.T. standards. This is a very long process and there are a lot of roads to be inventoried. This is a positive step forward in prioritizing the roads.

Bypass Project

- Soil borings need to be complete. Surveyors will identify right-of-way. Legal descriptions will be prepared. Appraisals will be obtained, and then engineers can begin work on the design.

The presentation of the floor budget concluded.

The County Manager advised that there were other requests made for funding that was not included in the floor budget. While the Board may make a decision to include any of the requests, the County Manager said that they will have to make a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the budget somewhere else in order to do so.

The Florida Legislature created a new department in 2007 titled The Office of Conflict Counsel. They are charged with representing cases where Public Defenders declare a conflict. Appeals have been filed in this matter, but should the decision hold, this will be an unfunded mandate for the county.

There was citizen comment and questions from the audience, and away from the microphone, which were not completely audible to the Clerk.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen David Rountree: A fee is charge to the private sector for tire disposal. The tires are then stored at the business and will eventually be disposed of at the owners' expense. The vast majority of those tires being disposed of are tires that are gathered from the road. A citizens who takes tires to the landfill will be charged a disposal feel.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen David Rountree: By law, anyone who levies ad valorem, with the exception of the City of Lake City and the School Board, are required to pay for the Property Appraiser's expenses. The Tax Collector is a fee office and he keeps a percentage of everything he collects.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen David Rountree: Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern; there are four districts within the state of Florida. Columbia County is in a district that has a total of 14 counties. There are two sites. One is in Columbia County and the other is in Suwannee County. There is money in the IDA fund this year to do some preliminary wetlands identification work so that there is some history established on the site should we have interest from a business.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen David Rountree: The Community Redevelopment Fee is the money that is paid to the redevelopment fund of the City of Lake City. The countywide millage in the redevelopment area has to refund anything in excess of the base year.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen Stewart Lilker: The reason he [the County Manager] said “loan” and “bond” money is because he is uncertain what the cost of the money will be. This will not be an internal loan.

The County Manager and Commissioner Weaver responded to comments from Citizen Stewart Lilker: All salaries of the county are public record. Approximately three years ago a survey was taken and county employees were raised except for the County Manager.

The County Manager answered questions from Citizen Stewart Lilker: Tiffany Knagghey is an employee of Powell & Jones, CPA. Crystal Decisions is probably a software company used by Powell and Jones. All of the numbers can be gathered out of an itemized report for attorney fees, etc.

The unbudgeted expenditure requests were:

Meridian Behavioral Healthcare - Increased Funding Request \$3,759.91. The County has budgeted \$195,000. Commissioner Weaver said that if Meridian is short of funds through the year that he may be able to assist with his special projects fund balance

Columbia County Fire Department Auxiliary - Financial Assistance \$5,000.00. Commissioner Weaver said that he would give a private donation.

United Way Columbia County 211 - \$7,620.00.

United Way (for all United Way Programs) - \$15,000.

Well-Florida Council - Financial Assistance \$4,781.00.

The Good Shepard of Northeast Florida - Self Help Housing Assistance \$135,650.00.

Columbia County Senior Services - Transfer of Van Maintenance to County - \$21,000.00.

Downtown Action Corporation - White Christmas Celebration \$7,500.00. Commissioner Weaver said he appreciated their good work and that he would reserve some discretionary funds to give assistance based on emergencies.

Beautification Committee - \$1,000 request. No one was present to represent the committee.

Lake City/Columbia County - Arbor Day Collection \$5,000.00

Other

Commissioner Bailey asked the County Manager if would compute the figures for giving the county employees a \$2,000 bonus and the numbers for giving them getting a 3% raise. He said he'd like to be able to compare the two. There was a brief discussion. The County Manager will provide the computation for the Board's review and discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

Board of County Commissioners

P. DeWitt Cason
Clerk of Circuit Court