



You Are Why We Are Here

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
June 12, 2018
6:00 p.m.**

BOC: Commission Chairman Thomas Bridges
District 1 Commissioner Robert Franklin
District 2 Commissioner Dr. Jason Macomson
District 3 Commissioner Jeff Jacques
District 4 Commissioner Eddie Wester

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

Staff: County Manager Beth Thomas
County Clerk Elaine Evans

Chairman Bridges called the public hearing to order and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend. He said the purpose of this meeting is to receive input on the FY2019 budget. Chairman Bridges welcomed Mayor Ralph Owens from the City of Lavonia and asked if he would like to comment. Mayor Owens declined saying he only came to listen. Chairman Bridges thanked Shane Scoggins of the Franklin County Citizen for his coverage of the Commissioners meetings.

Chairman Bridges said at the last meeting there were a couple of constitutional officers who were concerned about the flyer that was sent to them. He asked Mrs. Thomas if there had been any input from those two constitutional officers. Mrs. Thomas said the only constitutional officer she has heard from and met with is Sheriff Thomas and his Chief Deputy Jimmy LeCroy. Commissioner Wester and Commissioner Franklin also attended this meeting. No input has been received for the budget from two constitutional officers and one department. Chairman Bridges questioned Mrs. Thomas if those officers have received information. Mrs. Thomas said yes, the financial reports were printed and placed in the department boxes. Chairman Bridges said the budget seems to be growing, especially the Sheriff.

Mrs. Thomas said she and Commissioner Wester and Commissioner Franklin met with Sheriff Thomas and Mr. LeCroy and budget information was requested. She said Sheriff Thomas provided this documentation around 3:45 this afternoon. The final estimated number from the Sheriff for his budget is about 4.3 million dollars. Dr. Macomson questioned where the Sheriff stands on his current budget. Mrs. Thomas said as of May the budget total is 3.8 million dollars and he is running right at 4.3 million dollars. She said there will be adjustments to the Sheriff's budget of around



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\$75,000 for the school resource officers and a few expenditures that will be recaptured with SPLOST. Commissioner Jacques said from his figures it is a difference of about \$750,000 in the budget. He said he has not factored in the reimbursement for the SRO and questioned if this is for one or two positions. Mrs. Thomas said she sent the invoice to the school system for \$102,000 because this was their budgeted amount.

Commissioner Jacques said on the real property 5.8 million was budgeted with collections showing 5.5 million. He questioned what has led to the difference. Mrs. Thomas said property taxes have to be taken as a whole with current year and prior year. This is not annualized; the collections are taken as they come in. Commissioner Jacques questioned Mrs. Thomas based on her knowledge if this is very close to the total for this year. Mrs. Thomas said summed together this is only off by about \$60,000. She said the commission on tax collections appears to be off for this year and it will be researched for classification.

Dr. Macomson inquired how the request from the Sheriff will equate to the mills needed. Mrs. Thomas said she is working off the information from last year as she does not have updated numbers. The growth for this year's digest is expected to be around \$80,000 to \$100,000. Commissioner Jacques stated one mill equals \$595,000, plus or minus. Mrs. Thomas said for budgeting purposes she stays conservative, at a constant number.

Chairman Bridges told Sheriff Thomas the memo for his department's budget for the coming year was received. He asked Sheriff Thomas to come forward and address this. Sheriff Thomas came forward and stated a lot of the overage in the current budget is due to officers leaving and their leave time being paid out. He said replacement officers have to be hired and the leave time has to be paid to the officers who have terminated employment. This creates a situation of overage in the wages as well as the insurance if they choose to receive a check every pay period instead of a lumpsum payment. Sheriff Thomas said two officers are now paid for the position of one. He also said most of the time new uniforms have to be bought because they will not fit the next employee. The training of the new employee for six to eight weeks also puts stress on the budget as this takes an officer away from regular duties. Sheriff Thomas said the call volume for 2017 was a little over 19,000.

Sheriff Thomas said he is working with the District Attorney and the Department of Corrections to be able to use Skype for inmate hearings. This way the inmate would only need to be transported for a trial. Sheriff Thomas said this would save the County a chunk of money and the DA is confident that it will go through. He said he is doing the best he can with the situation he is in with losing officers and other expenses. Sheriff Thomas said every officer he has runs calls, including the investigators when needed. Chairman Bridges questioned Sheriff Thomas about the build up on his officers as some of them seem to have a lot of leave time. Sheriff Thomas said he and Mr. LeCroy are working on new employees being capped at 480 hours with the current employees being grandfathered and left alone. He plans to



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work on having the grandfathered employees begin to work their time down.

This past Thursday and Friday two different courts were held, one at the main courthouse and one at the justice center. Sheriff Thomas said this takes double officers to handle the court duties. He said officers have to be called in for overtime during the court times. Mrs. Thomas asked Sheriff Thomas if his number includes increases in salaries for his staff. Sheriff Thomas said increases for the jail is included but nothing else. This would move the detention officers up to \$11 per hour. He also said he is very hopeful for the Department of Corrections to approve the use of Skype as this would save on transports and overtime. Mrs. Thomas said that is a fantastic idea. Sheriff Thomas said it is used in other states.

Commissioner Wester said in last week's meeting with Sheriff Thomas, Mr. LeCroy, Commissioner Franklin and Mrs. Thomas the possibility was mentioned of getting a new superior court judge with the approximate costs being around \$750,000 to \$800,000. He asked Sheriff Thomas where this amount would come from. Sheriff Thomas said the extra judge is not written in stone, it is only being talked about and he wanted the Commissioners to be aware of it.

Chairman Bridges asked Sheriff Thomas did he think the new law taking effect on July 1 regarding misdemeanors for people who cannot pay bonds would help with the jail releases. Sheriff Thomas said it probably will but the point is if you get someone for suspended license out of California or another state, they are not coming back. The County will have a drawer full of bench warrants with no money collected. Sheriff Thomas said the Governor's criminal reform took people out of the prison system and sent them back to the county jails. Probation is given most of the time for a misdemeanor charge with maybe 30 days in the county jail.

Commissioner Jacques questioned Sheriff Thomas if another superior court judge was fully implemented would it help purge the current jail population. Sheriff Thomas said he thought it would help because it would get people through the system quicker. The only problem would be if the defense attorney asked for a continuance. If that happened the person would still be in jail. Commissioner Jacques asked Mrs. Thomas since the Sheriff had turned in a revised proposal would a tax increase be needed. Mrs. Thomas said yes as revenues are not expected to come in higher.

Chairman Bridges stated in today's mail he received notification from ACCG that Franklin County has received a dividend on the insurance and asked Mrs. Thomas if she had received this. Mrs. Thomas said she received this along with the renewal and the bill, unfortunately even with the dividend the property insurance has increased. Chairman Bridges questioned if this dividend was applied to the bill. Mrs. Thomas affirmed it is. She also said the staff does the safety program and received a reduction of around \$10,000 for this year. Even with participating in the safety program the premiums are increasing due to the volume of claims.



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Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas how much trimming is needed from the budget to get to a safe area. Mrs. Thomas said she only has a \$1,400 buffer in the budget. She said there is no wiggle room in the budget and to make the change to the budget revenue will need to be found or a tax increase implemented. Chairman Bridges asked if there is a timetable to continue this discussion or if the Commissioners just work and speak individually. Mrs. Thomas said tonight is a public hearing to take input from the public. The Board is welcome to call additional meetings if needed. There is also another public hearing for the budget scheduled for June 26 at 5:30 p.m. before the work session. Mrs. Thomas said the adoption of the budget is needed at the work session to begin on July 1. The property tax and millage rate does not have to be addressed until July. Additional meetings for this will be necessary in July. Mrs. Thomas told the Commissioners she is available for further discussion, information and questions.

Commissioner Wester inquired of the other Commissioners if they have received any phone calls for this budget cycle as he has received more than in previous years. Commissioner Jacques said he has received many. Chairman Bridges said he has talked pretty lengthy in several situations about the budget and is trying to educate people of why the budget is tight. He said most of the questions he has received are regarding the Sheriff and his budget and is encouraging people to contact the Sheriff. Commissioner Wester said he directed people to contact the Sheriff too. Sheriff Thomas said that is fine, he will take care of it.

Dr. Macomson stated to Mrs. Thomas that in her reports there are departments across the County that come in under budget. Mrs. Thomas said yes. Dr. Macomson questioned if she uses last year's numbers from the departments as a baseline to start this year's budget. Mrs. Thomas said no, she does not. She said in the FY16 budget everything was rebased to the departments run rates. Since that time, she has taken an incremental approach and has not cut staff. Mrs. Thomas said some of the departments are under budget only because of staffing issues. It is not appropriate to cut the positions as the hope is to replace them at some time. It is also not appropriate to cut the departments for managing well. Dr. Macomson stated this is where the savings is coming from. Mrs. Thomas said yes and she is using SPLOST wherever it can be used. Chairman Bridges and Commissioner Jacques said if any revenue is left over the County needs to be building up the fund balance.

Mrs. Thomas said because of the excess personal time that has been accrued, the County has around a \$536,000 liability for this. The County does not have this sitting in the bank waiting to pay employees when they leave. She said for office personnel it is okay because they don't have to be replaced for the day when they take time off. For the departments who work the 24/7 positions they have to be replaced when taking off. Commissioner Wester asked what the cap is for paid time off. Mrs. Thomas said for the County employees it is 480 hours, prior to the 2014 handbook update it was 240 hours. She said the leave time policy needs to be revamped and have a cap of the overall hours. Commissioner Wester asked if this approval would have been by the Board.



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Mrs. Thomas confirmed yes.

Joel Bufford asked if there was a tax increase would it be voted on by the public or by the Commissioners. Chairman Bridges said the Board would vote on it. The vote will take place for the budget on June 26.

Chairman Bridges adjourned the public hearing at 6:45 p.m.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 2018

Chairman J. Thomas Bridges

Robert L. Franklin, District 1 Commissioner

Dr. Jason Macomson, District 2 Commissioner

Jeff Jacques, District 3 Commissioner

Eddie Wester, District 4 Commissioner

Elaine H. Evans, County Clerk