



You Are Why We Are Here

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
June 26, 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 for the FY2019 budget to order. He said an opportunity would be given for comments and to please state your name for the record.

Tommy Bentley came forward and asked Sheriff Stevie Thomas what is the time limit for holding someone in jail. Sheriff Thomas said the court proceedings have to be gone through along with bond hearings and arraignments. If it is a felony the person has to go before the Grand Jury which only meets every six months. Sheriff Thomas said on the citations it is not a problem, they can get a bond and get out of jail. Mr. Bentley questioned if the State will give money for this. Sheriff Thomas said no, they won't. He said lately when people are sentenced, the State has been good about getting them out in three or four weeks. Sometimes the bonds are denied and sometimes they are so high that people cannot pay them. When this happens, the people stay in jail until court which can be six months to a year or longer.

Milton Bellamy came forward and questioned if the millage rate will increase because of this budget. Chairman Bridges assured Mr. Bellamy there is not a millage increase in this budget. He said the budget has been worked on for some time and does not include a tax increase. A millage increase was discussed but the Commissioners worked on the budget and strived hard for that not to happen.

Jennifer Renzetti asked for clarification on Chairman Bridges definition of strive, whether a property tax increase will happen or not. She stated she did not want the budget to increase and give the citizens a property tax increase for the Sheriff to have more money. Chairman Bridges said in his sight that is not going to happen. He said the goal for the Commissioners was to not increase the millage. Ms. Renzetti



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questioned how the County plans to bring in the extra money without increasing the millage rate. Chairman Bridges said the County expects no more money to go out than comes in.

***Tommy Bentley** asked about the number of employees in the Tax Commissioner and Probate Court offices. Chairman Bridges referred him to Tax Commissioner Bobby Martin and Probate Judge Ken Eavenson. Mr. Bentley questioned how many employees the County has. Mrs. Thomas said the County has around 200 on the payroll with 160 being full-time. She told Mr. Bentley his question about the constitutional officers is best directed to them. The Constitution of Georgia states that these departments hire their own employees and their employees are technically not employees of the Board of Commissioners. Mrs. Thomas said that she nor the Commissioners could tell Mr. Bentley or anyone else about the caseloads of these departments. Mr. Bentley said he had gone in the different offices and knew they used to have less employees. Mrs. Thomas said things have definitely changed.*

Commissioner Franklin said when Richard Holland was Tax Commissioner, most families only had one vehicle but now most have multiple vehicles and they all need tags. Commissioner Jacques clarified the directing of citizens to specific department heads was only for the constitutional officers. The Board of Commissioners has direct control over all the other departments. Chairman Bridges said this is true, there are four constitutional officers in the County.

Chairman Bridges asked Mrs. Thomas to give an overview of the proposed FY2019 budget. Mrs. Thomas said the initial proposed and advertised budget assumed property taxes to be constant. Information was received from the Sheriff on the increase needed by his department. Phone calls were also received by the Commissioners as well as office staff with concerns regarding a property tax increase. Mrs. Thomas said based on all this information the FY19 budget was revised. \$1,000 was added to revenue for a grant received from GEMA for the EMA director's salary. The school resource officer component was changed based on the commitment to funding from the Board of Education.

Mrs. Thomas said in 2015 when she first came to work for the County the FY16 budget was being created and all departments were rebased to their actual run rates. Property taxes were increased because the County reserves were depleted because this was used to weather the economic downturn. Two school resource officers were in the rebase and Mrs. Thomas said four additional school resource officers were hired this past year. She said the cost of the six school resource officers with benefits and taxes is about \$300,000. Of this \$300,000 the Board of Education has committed to pay 50%, increasing their funding from \$66,000 to \$150,000. Mrs. Thomas said in her new proposal the \$150,000 will go toward the Sheriff's budget. With the funding from the Board of Education there is still a shortfall of about \$100,000 to cover the school resource officers.



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The information from the Tax Assessors office is there should be some real growth in the property tax digest of about \$100,000. Mrs. Thomas said she is hopeful that the real growth will be more. The new budget proposal includes an increase of \$201,661.51 to cover the full cost of the six school resource officers. This amount will come from the increase from the Board of Education as well as the real growth in the property tax digest. Mrs. Thomas said this is the only change she made from the previous budget proposal. Commissioner Jacques told Mrs. Thomas she had done a good job of keeping the Commissioners informed. He asked for the bottom line of revenues and expenditures. Mrs. Thomas said the final revenue for the general fund is \$13,531,955 with general expenditures being \$13,143,107 and transfers out of \$386,965 predominately for the 911 system. Everyone is charged a \$1.50 on the telephone bills but this is no where close to covering the amount needed for operations for 911. The net surplus in the budget is \$1,883.

Chairman Bridges paused the public hearing at 5:50 p.m. The meeting remained open until 6:00 p.m. to give additional time for public comments.

***John Hylton** entered the meeting at 5:57 p.m. He said in his review of the budget it looks like the Sheriff's office is on pace to be \$800,000 overbudget. Mr. Hylton questioned if this is for one-time expenses that will go away and if the Commissioners have raised the Sheriff's budget in the past two years to allot for the overruns. Chairman Bridges said since he has been on the Commission Board the Sheriff's budget has risen from around \$3,200,000 to \$3,900,000. He said as for the one-time expense the Sheriff operates as a constitutional officer and he cannot answer that question. Sheriff Thomas explained part of this is from the leave time that has to be paid out to the terminating employee and the hiring and training of a new employee. He said five deputies and six detention officers terminated employment last year. Sheriff Thomas said hopefully this will not happen this year. Mr. Hylton then asked Sheriff Thomas if he expected some of this to go away. Sheriff Thomas said yes.*

Chairman Bridges adjourned the public hearing at 6:00 p.m.



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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