

MINUTES
FOURTH BUDGET MEETING OF THE
COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016
THURSDAY MAY 21, 2015
5:00 o'clock p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: The fourth budget meeting for Fiscal Year 2015 - 2016 was called to order at 5:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Terry R. Clark. The meeting was duly called and advertised.

PRESENT: Those present were Commissioners Luke Strong, Winfred Giddens, Marc DeMott, Donna Herndon, Paul Nagy, Johnny Hardin, Chairman Terry R. Clark, County Administrator Chas Cannon, Finance Director Wayne Putnal, and County Clerk Melissa Lawson.

ALSO PRESENT: Holly Phillips, Director of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Library; Darrell Moore, President of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Economic Development Authority; Larry Franklin, Chairman of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Economic Development Authority; and Alan Mauldin, Reporter with the Moultrie Observer.

FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016 BUDGET CONTINUED: Mr. Cannon reviewed a list of budget options and capital purchases with the board, highlighting recent changes made to the proposed budget.

At this time, Mr. Cannon informed the board of an email from Brad Gregory regarding School Resource Officer (SRO) positions and the equitable funding of these positions. Mr. Cannon stated that this correspondence was proof that negotiations were heading in the right direction.

Discussion ensued regarding the number of requested SRO's for the school system and the vehicles requested for these individuals.

Mr. Cannon stated that basically, the School Board and the County agree on the number of SRO's needed, but not on the utilization of the fourth officer.

Commissioner Giddens questioned Commissioner Nagy on the frequency of problems at various schools in Colquitt County. Commissioner Nagy stated that it varied, but commended School Resource Officer Tonero Bender on his performance regarding the disturbance at Charlie A. Gray Middle School.

Mr. Cannon addressed a recent newspaper article commending the Roads and Bridges Department on their quick and efficient response to a work order. Mr. Cannon stated that it was efficient, responsive personnel such as this that the county desired to retain, and further stated that citizens notice when they get a return on their taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Cannon presented the effect of the proposed millage increase on both residential and non-homesteaded properties, noting that neither increase was more than the upcoming state imposed increase on fuel.

May 21, 2015

Page 2

Mr. Cannon presented statistical millage rate data regarding surrounding counties of similar size to Colquitt County, including the Board of Education millage rates within these counties.

Mr. Cannon noted that most surrounding counties have higher millage rates than Colquitt County, and also noted that Colquitt County was below the median when compared to overall personnel costs in these counties.

MOULTRIE – COLQUITT COUNTY LIBRARY: Mr. Cannon gave a brief overview of the funds allocated for the Library. Mr. Cannon acknowledged the proposed cut of \$121,000.00 in funding to the Library, stating that the Library receives funding from the county, state, and Board of Education, but receives no funding directly from the City of Moultrie.

Holly Phillips, Director of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Library, addressed the board, and distributed a list of library activities for fiscal year 2014. Ms. Phillips thoroughly discussed these activities with the board.

Ms. Phillips briefly discussed the Ellen Payne Odom Genealogical Library, of which many visitors from around the state, and even the world, visit annually.

Ms. Phillips stated that the Library was the only resource in the community to provide free internet and computer access. She further stated that it was extremely important to provide equal opportunity access to this capability.

Ms. Phillips presented an annual report to the board, stating that the state currently provides 21% of the Library's funding, the county 68%, and the Board of Education 11%.

Ms. Phillips voiced her understanding that the county was forced to make difficult fiscal decisions, and vowed that her staff would do their part to reduce costs. However, Ms. Phillips stated that if the board were to cut funding in such a significant manner, a waiver would be required from the state. Basically, Ms. Phillips explained, a reduction in local funding necessitated this requirement in order to show that the reduction of funding was in equal proportion to other services.

Ms. Phillips urged the board to consider the fact that the Library is dependent on funding received from other agencies.

At this time, Mr. Cannon proposed moving the Library to the Special Service District, and in turn, split the funding with the City of Moultrie. Mr. Cannon explained that this would decrease the county's portion and increase the City of Moultrie's portion, due to the fact that the City currently did not contribute any funding directly to the Library.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the process involved to accomplish this. Mr. Cannon stated that the City of Moultrie must agree to the proposal.

Mr. Cannon stated that the Library maintained a healthy reserve balance, a major factor considered when funding was reduced.

Commissioner Hardin requested clarification that if the county were to reduce funding, the state could possibly reduce funding as well. Ms. Phillips replied that this was exactly the case, and more than likely, if considered, would do so in the same amount as the county.

Commissioner Nagy pointed out, that even with the reduction, the county still funded more than half of the Library's budget.

Mr. Cannon stated that approximately 60-70% of the Library's funding was derived from the county. Ms. Phillips replied that this was typical with most libraries around the region.

Commissioner Nagy questioned if surrounding cities contributed to libraries located within the region. Ms. Phillips stated that some do, and mentioned a recent visit to the Moultrie City Council to request funding. She further stated that her request for funding was denied.

Mr. Cannon stated that the issue involving moving the Library to the Special Service District could be discussed with the city, but further stated that any changes would not be effective within the upcoming fiscal year.

Commissioner DeMott questioned what factors were considered by Mr. Cannon and Mr. Putnal when deciding upon such a significant reduction in funding. Mr. Cannon stated that the amount of savings maintained by the Library, combined with the fact that Public Safety and Public Works are the two highest priorities within the county budget, assisted in making the decision to cut funding.

Mr. Cannon stated that some of the decreased funding could be restored, or all, but stated that the money must be derived from somewhere.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she understood that the county wasn't mandated to fund the Library, but stressed the importance of literacy in children.

Commissioner Giddens questioned how many of the children that visited the Library were bilingual. Ms. Phillips stated that although a language barrier did exist, the library was looking to employ another bilingual employee due to the high Hispanic population in Colquitt County.

Mr. Cannon stated that he did not know the history of how the county came to serve as the major revenue source for the county.

Ms. Phillips stated that the state's philosophy was that libraries were a local responsibility, thus state funds were normally only offered to enhance library functions, not to support them.

Mr. Cannon suggested the possibility of deriving \$121,000.00 in reduced county funding from the Library's own reserves. Ms. Phillips stated that she could get through the year, but

predicted difficulties due to the fact that the Library has no way of generating additional income to recover from the loss.

Ms. Phillips stated that some of the reserve funds were designated for future renovations.

Commissioner DeMott addressed the board members with more tenure, and inquired as to whether or not this particular issue had been discussed in the past.

Commissioner Hardin stated that, to his knowledge, it had not.

Chairman Clark declared that he questioned these facts when serving on the Library board.

Commissioner Herndon questioned how long the school board had been contributing funds to the Library. Ms. Phillips stated that the school board has provided funding for several years, declaring a very strong partnership with the school system.

Commissioner Hardin stated that the funding derived from the county and city should be more equitable. Commissioner Herndon agreed.

Mr. Cannon suggested ongoing negotiations with the school board and the City of Moultrie to see if a three way split in funding was possible.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if Ms. Phillips had approached the Board of Education regarding additional funding. Ms. Phillips stated that she had, with the Board of Education almost eliminating Library funding as part of their last fiscal budget. Ms. Phillips stated that the Colquitt County Board of Education was quite generous with funding when compared to surrounding counties.

Commissioner Herndon stressed the importance of the Library for school children during summer break, stating that it was the only resource for children desiring to read during this time.

Again, Mr. Cannon suggested an equal, three way split between the county, City of Moultrie, and the Board of Education.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the number of children's programs that were facilitated at the library.

Mr. Cannon stated that decreases in funding were always hard to digest.

In closing, Ms. Phillips thanked the board for their time and consideration and stated that she was always available to answer questions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA): At this time, Mr. Cannon called upon Darrell Moore, President of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Economic Development Authority, to present to the board.

Mr. Moore thanked the board for the opportunity to present, and stated that the intent of the Economic Development Authority was to promote Colquitt County.

Mr. Moore stated that Economic Development Authorities were created by state legislation in order to create jobs and expand tax digests. He further stated that economic development was the only entity that a government funds in which it maintains a potential for return on investment.

Mr. Moore explained that historically, the EDA was funded \$75,000.00 from both the city and county, and designated the following as returns on investment; National Beef, Sanderson Farms, Southern Valley, Destiny Industries, Beadles Lumber, and Ice House America. Mr. Moore stated that as a result of these entities, 2000 jobs were created, an excess of \$70,000,000.00 in payroll proceeds generated, and an estimated 30% increase in sales tax collections.

Mr. Moore explained that county funding helps to cover personnel costs, operational expenses, and help to contribute to the recruitment and retention of industry in Colquitt County.

Mr. Moore declared that economic development had a positive impact on the community, and benefits all local entities.

Mr. Moore presented fiscal data in comparison to Economic Development Authorities in surrounding counties, declaring that the Moultrie – Colquitt County Economic Development Authority created more jobs than these counties, on a significantly smaller budget.

Mr. Moore stated that due to the fast track nature of today's business climate, potential firms begin with a search for a potential site location. As a result, he further stated that it was imperative to have a professional economic development team that was supported by community elected leadership.

Mr. Moore presented statistical economic development information, stating that 80% of all industrial prospects desire an existing structure or building. In addition, Mr. Moore stated that the same percentage of industrial prospects desired to be within one hour of Atlanta. In light of these factors, Mr. Moore declared that Colquitt County has the opportunity for four out of every one hundred prospects considering the state of Georgia. To increase these odds, Mr. Moore stated that the EDA would focus on developing industrial sites and construction buildings in order to attract potential businesses.

Commissioner Giddens questioned if Mr. Moore had an existing building that potential developers would be interested in. Mr. Moore replied that the Hurst building, located in Spence Field, was an excellent choice.

Mr. Moore stated that first class, available sites were a necessity, declaring that Industrial Park and Spence Field were basically full of tenants. As a result, Mr. Moore stated that the plan was to develop and construct additional buildings at Citizens Business Park in order to facilitate and prepare for future growth in Colquitt County.

Also, Mr. Moore stated that if Colquitt County has a first class site, private investors may be interested in a partnership to develop speculation buildings. He further stated this would be an excellent opportunity for investors to come in and contribute to the economic growth of Colquitt County.

Discussion ensued regarding interest in the Hurst building, located in Spence Field.

In order to attract new industry and create jobs, Mr. Moore stated that a good plan of action was to purchase property, develop infrastructure for a new industrial park, and construct a first class speculation building. Mr. Moore stated that all these factors combined were needed in order to build a long term commitment to economic development in Colquitt County.

Mr. Moore stated that industrial development would be worth more to Colquitt County than any other classification, stressing that economic development of available land would create more money for schools, roads, parks and recreation, and public safety – without increasing the burden on the property owner.

Mr. Moore presented the benefits of sales taxes resulting from new industry and growth.

Commissioner Giddens voiced his concern regarding damage to the county's road infrastructure due to existing and potential industry.

Mr. Moore declared that for every payroll dollar earned in Colquitt County, it is spent an average of seven times in the community, resulting in increased sales tax revenues.

Mr. Moore stated it was imperative to decrease the labor drain of losing 2,500 citizens to surrounding communities for the purpose of seeking employment.

Mr. Moore stated that long term support and funding was necessary in order for economic development to be successful in Colquitt County.

At this time, Larry Franklin, Chairman of the Moultrie – Colquitt County Development Authority, addressed the board. Mr. Franklin stated that he would be glad to answer any questions the board may have.

Mr. Franklin spoke of past success in not only recruiting potential industry, but in supporting existing ones.

Commissioner Hardin stated that he recognized the need for economic development and the impact it has on communities, but also stressed that the county was limited fiscally.

Mr. Moore stated that the EDA appreciated any resources to create economic development.

Commissioner Nagy stated that he understood the need to focus on promoting industry, and also voiced his understanding that not all buildings are the same. Commissioner Nagy questioned how many buildings the EDA currently had available for potential prospects.

Mr. Moore replied that the Hurst building was the main one.

Mr. Franklin stated that the Destiny building and Layfield buildings were also available.

Mr. Franklin mentioned a recent collaboration with a local businessman to provide a building for a potential prospect.

Mr. Franklin stated that the EDA was instrumental in encouraging National Beef to remain in Moultrie, and also mentioned the relocation of The Blue Sky Grill into the old Friedlander building.

Mr. Franklin stated the main purpose of the EDA was to increase the tax base and create jobs, through growth. He further stated that it wasn't fair to place the burden upon the backs of county taxpayers, declaring that it was essential to increase cash flow in Colquitt County.

Mr. Franklin stated that he understood the fiscal challenges faced by the county, and suggested assistance through deeding county owned property to the EDA for the purpose of economic development.

Prospective sites and buildings for economic development were discussed in detail.

Mr. Franklin stated that the key to investing money was doing so in a way to ensure a return on your investment.

Commissioner Nagy questioned when an answer would be obtained regarding a potential tenant for the Hurst building. Mr. Moore replied that it could be within the next week.

Commissioner Nagy stated that he understood that approximately 70% of all jobs were created by businesses that already existed, and questioned what the EDA did in order to help these individuals.

Mr. Moore stated that he endeavored to visit all businesses at least annually and was constantly in touch with existing industry in order to provide support and lend assistance. Mr. Moore further stated that a local company would get the same consideration as a new company.

In closing, Mr. Moore and Mr. Franklin thanked the board for their time and support.

The board recessed for a five minute break.

Upon return from break, Mr. Cannon suggested that the board lead remaining discussions.

Commissioner Nagy voiced his support of moving the Library to the Special Service District in order to obtain more equitable funding.

Discussion ensued regarding the benefits of the Library and the importance of promoting literacy to the children of Colquitt County.

Mr. Cannon informed the board that during the initial stages of the budget process, he requested all outside entities provide financial statements in order to justify the current level of funding received by the county.

Commissioner DeMott stated that he hated to restrict funding to the Library in such a significant manner.

Mr. Cannon stated that upon looking at their financial statements and realizing the healthy amount of reserve funds maintained by the Library, he felt that they agency would withstand the reduction.

Commissioner DeMott noted that the Ellen Payne Odom Genealogical Library attracted visitors to Colquitt County.

Mr. Cannon stated that county funds had to be budgeted in order of priority, with those main priorities consisting of public safety and public works.

At this time, Commissioner Herndon requested more information regarding Parks and Recreation funding.

Mr. Cannon stated that over the last several years, the county's portion of funding for Parks and Recreation has increased significantly. Per the original agreement with the City of Moultrie, Mr. Cannon explained that geographical participant information was to be submitted on a monthly basis, and this information has not been provided.

Mr. Cannon stated that aside from organized, competitive recreational events, no record is kept regarding participation. He further stated that funding should be based on participation, and when that information is not provided, it is extremely difficult to determine equitable funding. To date, Mr. Cannon stated that the City of Moultrie has been unable to provide this documentation.

In addition, Mr. Cannon explained that the City of Moultrie receives all revenues for participation, but does not reimburse them based on participation. He further stated that Recreation was not contained within one department, but was facilitated amongst three separate departments, which increased overhead costs.

Mr. Cannon declared that a method must be agreed upon to obtain accurate utilization data, stating that the county should fund based upon participation, as stated in the original 1995 agreement.

Commissioner Nagy explained the reduction in funding to Parks and Recreation was basically a reflection of "true-up" costs owed to the county.

Mr. Cannon stated that an excess of \$400,000.00 was due to the county in "true-up" costs, but the reduction consisted of an amount equal to one year of these costs.

Mr. Cannon declared his belief that Parks and Recreation was a good program, stating that organized sports were good for the youth of the county. Aside from those organized sports programs and their facilities, Mr. Cannon declared that funding should come solely from the City of Moultrie, unless the City could provide accurate utilization information for facilities and programs that are not part of organized sports.

The fiscal budget year observed by the City of Moultrie was briefly discussed, as well as the Parks and Recreation program itself.

At this time, discussion ensued regarding the possibility of county governments coordinating their own economic development efforts, and the subsequent cost of funding the Economic Development Authority as a separate entity.

Commissioner DeMott remarked that the Economic Development Authority was located in a historic building, with the location being unique to Colquitt County.

Commissioner Giddens questioned the number of remaining budget meetings.

Mr. Cannon reviewed key, upcoming dates with the board.

Commissioner Giddens stated he would like to designate one budget meeting to review the budget thoroughly, page by page, and questioned the need for a new vehicle in the Compliance Office.

The benefit of having an additional, called budget meeting was discussed.

It was the consensus of the board to schedule an additional called meeting to discuss the budget on Tuesday, May 26, 2014.

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry R. Clark
Chairman

Melissa Lawson
County Clerk

Approved:
