

"Continued Meeting Minutes"
Proposed Budget 2010-2011
Russell County Commission Meeting
September 8, 2010
1:00 P.M. EST

The recessed Commission meeting was called to order by Chair Martin.

Commission members present: Chair Martin, Vice Chair Lee, Ronnie Reed, Cattie Epps, Mervin Dudley and Larry Screws; Tillman Pugh; absent. County Administrator LeAnn Horne was also present and kept minutes.

A quorum was established by the Administrator.

County Administrator Horne gave an overview of the proposed budget for 2010-2011 stating: "The County financial position is solid. The County finished the 2009 fiscal year with an unreserved General Fund balance of \$4.5 million. The projected General Fund for this fiscal year is \$3.5 million. The 2011 budget approach being presented is relatively flat in comparison to 2009. Most of the County's revenue comes from property taxes—30% of General Fund revenues, sales taxes roughly 30% and charges for services 20%. The County financial outlook is stable which reflects in the budget due to a stable economic base which we expect to continue to grow and deepen as residential and commercial development around Fort Benning continues. Russell County is one of two counties in the State of Alabama reported by S&P and Moody's Financial Services located in New York that are not experiencing a downturn in the local economy. The other is Huntsville, Alabama."

"Our revenues projected a 2% growth for ad valorem. Ad valorem is collected in arrears; October 2010 the 2009 property taxes will be collected as outlined by State law. This means county revenues are collected a year behind; however, citizens are expecting services today and for the County to be able to provide those services, such as law enforcement, roads, recreation, and etc."

"Russell County has reached budgeted goals in revenue in this fiscal year (2009-2010) and the County elected officials and appointed department heads have managed their departmental budgets well again this year keeping expenses to a minimum."

"I want to point out to the Commission that the rating agencies after reviewing extensively the county's finances for the last six (6) years gave Russell County another A+ credit rating."

County Administrator provided the following overview of the proposed 2010-2011 budget: The proposed Russell County 2011 budget as presented totals for general fund is \$13,163,041. Proposed total budget including all funds is \$31,768,734.

- This upcoming budget year the County has an additional payroll for each department due to the timing of fiscal year payroll vs. calendar year which is reflected in the salary lines of each department. This does not mean any increase in current salaries
- Health Insurance increase 3.5% for regular employees up to 6.5% for retirees (County pays 100% premiums to include increase for employees and retirees)
- No salary increases are included in the proposed budget for this year
- A high priority has been placed on paving dirt roads; the General Fund is supporting by transferring \$860,000 to Engineering services for paving projects & personnel needs
- Due to the unprecedented growth with new residents in the County; proposed in this budget is 2 FT deputies and 2 PT deputies; funds for 5 new patrol cars – total \$217,037 additional
- Also included this year for capital improvements is the replacement of the jail locking/computer systems estimated at \$275,000 which was approved by this Commission in this fiscal year. Phenix City is anticipated to reimburse one-third based on the contract between the City and County

Appropriations overview:

- Due to the overwhelming growth especially in the Fort Mitchell area; proposed is an economic development increase to cover additional expenses of salaries, recruitment efforts by the Chamber, publication & presentation materials. Chamber Requested \$82,000 -- proposed \$73,400
- A new item in the recreation line includes \$38,000 for a Recreation & Sports Facilities Manager
- Volunteer Fire Department appropriation was moved from PB Road & Bridge to appropriations in the general fund total: \$75,000
- Commissioner Reed requested for additional funding for several agencies located within his District which are outlined in his letter under Commission request(s) and one is a new agency
- Joint City/County animal shelter decreased from \$140,000 to \$92,000

Capital Projects:

The Russell Judicial Center financing has been approved and closed. The funds are reflected in the Public Building Road & Bridge for the renovation of the former Russell County Courthouse. Also in this fund are the remaining construction funds from the 2008 warrant issue. Per the Commissions agreement to payoff the existing 2002 remaining debt for the warrant series 2002; debt service payments are budgeted and scheduled to be paid in 2011.

The County Engineer is scheduled later on the agenda to discuss capital projects under his direction which includes paving projects.

County Administrator stated, at this point, we can go back to the order of the agenda unless Commissioners have comments, questions or would like to discuss the report thus far.

Commissioner Reed asked to have figures for a 3% salary increase for all employees be brought back for review at the next regular Commission meeting.

The County Commission departmental budget is the same as last year basically. The slight additional increase is due to an additional payroll due to calendar year. Commissioner Lee asked about \$5,000 in equipment and furniture. Ms. Horne stated it was for the upgrade of computers for accounting purposes.

Probate Judge Harden stated: There is very little change in this year's budget. The business license revenue has increased and expenses have been kept to a minimum. He accepts his departmental budget as presented.

The Revenue Commission's budget is relatively the same as last year per Commissioner Naomi Elliott. She also stated that when the Commission approves the budget, that they also approve the S&W Computer Contract and also approve the Chair to sign all documents for the contract renewals. She stated that she is fine with the proposed budget for the revenue department.

Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott stated that the Mapping/Appraisal Department's budget has a significant increase due to aerial photography budgeted at \$150,000 for this project. Also a part-time position has been included to fill a vacant full-time position. Mrs. Elliott also requested the Commission approve the Chair to sign contracts for the aerial photography when budget is approved. The State has already approved this budget.

Tag Commissioner Paulette Colbert stated she has submitted a request for level funding for the Tag Office but with an increase in office equipment repairs however decreasing another line item in order to stay close to level funding as requested by the Administrator. She stated she is fine with her proposed budget.

Board of Registrar, Jimmy Adams, stated: The Board of Registrars proposed budget is the same as last year's budget basically level funded. Mr. Adams is fine with the proposed budget and stated that the large mailing that requires an increase in postage is not required to be published this upcoming year.

Richards Sellers reviewed the Building and Grounds Maintenance proposed budget and is in agreement with the department's proposed budget for 2011. There is a request for a pickup truck replacing the one Mr. Sellers is using that the Sheriff's Department loaned. Mr. Sellers will utilize the state bid listing to select a truck.

Sheriff Boswell: There are very few line items that we requested an increase for. He did request 6 new patrol cars but the Administrator reduced that to five cars. Communications increased \$9,000 due to a switch from the Southern Link System; we are on Verizon which allows better area coverage and features which help them communicate and complete more work with less people.

Sheriff stated he realizes revenues are flat however feels that his employees should receive the pay plan increase.

Commissioner Lee: Sheriff Boswell is requesting a \$9,000 increase, but it has not been included in the budget yet. Ms Horne: That is correct – line was level funded.

Sheriff Boswell also explained the need for more deputies due to the growth Russell County is experiencing from BRAC. Fort Benning did a study and determined for the Sheriff's Department to be efficient it needs to grow approximately 20%. The extra deputies he asked for are only half of what is needed. It was also recommended to add 100 beds to the jail, which has not been done as of this date. This morning there are 365 inmates being housed at the jail that was built for only 235 inmates. That problem is also not going away. This budget does not reflect a new jail addition but the Commission will have to address that at some point due to the overflow at the jail with increased inmates. Otherwise; I am relatively satisfied with the proposed budget and we will do our best to work within it. I appreciate Mrs. Horne meeting with us 3 or 4 times to work out issues and reach the point of presenting you with the budget.

Ms. Horne informed the Commission that an increase was added to the Animal Control Budget's contract services to offset the amount for fencing and care of large animals at the proposed Sandfort Road School site. A new vehicle was also requested due to the age of the truck presently being used however was not funded in the proposed budget. The Sheriff agreed not to fund one this year and wait to see how the revenue comes in; but at some point this does need to be taken into consideration.

William Alexander, Director of Homeland Security/EMA stated: He was asked to level fund their budget and was able to reduce it by seven thousand dollars. \$100,000 of the budget will come from Federal and State grants. The City is planning to give our department \$20,000 this year and \$40,000 from the State.

Ms. Horne presented the Coroner's budget. She stated; that after he was presented with the final proposed budget she received no comments back from the Coroner. The Coroner requested to hire a full-time person for his office (a deputy) but that was not funded in the proposed budget and his deputies are remaining part-time as the Coroner by local law is part-time.

The Building Inspector's budget reflects the same budget other than the extra payroll that is reflected in every department's budget. Other than concerns about registration and training being \$140.00 short than anticipated for course work; the budget is fine according to Greg Smith.

Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend discussed his increased budget was due to the budget had been structured for one person and now there are two in the department which increased communications. Mr. Friend is fine with the proposed budget. Ms. Horne reminded the Commission that when this budget is approved, unless you state otherwise, the Commission will be extending the employment of an extra enforcement officer. As of September 30, 2010 this would have been his last day if not approved to be extended (see information included).

Together these officers have brought additional revenues into the general fund that may not otherwise have been collected. Their salaries are included in the Building Inspectors Department. Mr. Friend and Mr. Hollins have waived their insurance; therefore, the County is saving on benefits. Mr. Friend has also requested for Mr. Hollins contract to be extended for 2 years instead of the 1year contract and this request has been included in this year's budget.

County Engineer Larry Kite stated his budget was balanced this year. However, it was at the cost of not putting some projects in the budget that had been requested by some Commissioners. We were not level funded because we have approximately \$40,000 less projected in revenue than there was available last year. We balanced that out by reducing some line items and increasing others.

Engineering Minor Equipment and Data Processing were increased significantly due to the GIS Grant which is required to match with some hardware and software items, also additional training related to the GIS system. We were able to keep 5.21 miles of dirt road paving projects in the budget, which are carrying over from this year and funds provided from general fund. There are also 10.8 miles of Federal paving planned, which also there is about 18 miles of road striping planned. Salary line items also increased due to 3.85 % added for the extra pay period and requesting for the two assistant engineers to receive pay increases which are reflected in the proposed salary numbers. Mr. Blakeney's increase was due to him assuming additional duties for the abolished maintenance superintendent position along with his original duties. Mr. Bundy's, graduate civil engineer, increase is requested due him starting off at a lower salary than what I feel he should have been. Also, note Mr. Blakeney's salary is reimbursed 50% by the State.

County Administrator Horne stated: The County has invested estimated \$1.5 million in the Russell County Sports Complex. The complex is continuing to grow and is used by three to four hundred children during the season as well as others. The Commission cancelled the maintenance contracts last year and placed the maintenance of the property with the county maintenance department with engineering bush-hogging the outer areas. There are also other daily maintenance issues of the press box building, fencing, sprinkler system and etc. that the league members are not managing which is costing the county additional funds. In the recreation line is funding to hire a manager for the Sports Complex.

Commissioner Dudley discussed reasons to approve hiring the manager/director for the complex and benefits of growing recreation in the county. This has been included in this budget along with matches for additional grants that have been applied for pertaining to the construction of others ball fields. Discussion of an office for the manager could be established in the Seale Courthouse or utilizing of the press box building along with one person assigned to help with cutting grass/fields.

Suzanne Burnette and Lisa Sandt from Lee Russell Council of Governments were present to discuss their request for appropriations and answer questions about grant applications. This is a level funded request per Mrs. Burnette.

Victor Cross with the Chamber of Commerce explained their appropriations request(s) and need for a slight increase in the economic development area.

Commissioner proposed project/budget requests as follows:

Commissioner Reed requested to add the Macon-Russell Community Action to the appropriations. He was asked to provide more information about how the funds will be utilized for this organization. Commissioner Lee stated county funds should not go to pay citizens utilities. Discussion to table but there was no vote. Also stated by the County Administrator noted in the Commissioner's letter there has been restructuring of other appropriations to organizations in his District.

Chair Martin requested to fund for a satellite library in the Fort Mitchell area due to the growth—this is a wish for future development. She also asked the Engineering Department to do all they can to maintain roads in the Harris Subdivision area and Poyner Court per the project list provided by the engineer.

Commissioner Lee asked to place reroofing the Old Seale Courthouse in this year's budget. This is not in the proposed budget. After discussion, it was agreed to add \$20,000 to the Maintenance Budget; line item 524 Additions and Renovations to have the Old Seale Courthouse reroofed.

Commissioner Epps would like to have more lighting for the Senior Activity Center, which has been included in the proposed maintenance budget again this year. Also a request(s) for informational graphics/newsletter for citizens about the area government and services—this is being funded by the Chamber in the proposed budget. Not included in the proposed budget is miscellaneous expense allowance for Commissioners'.

Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the proposed 2010/2011 Budget as presented with the addition of the Old Seale Courthouse reproofing project. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. District 1(Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Pugh) was absent; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, yes; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6 (Dudley) voted, yes; District 7 (Screws) voted, yes. The budget was unanimously approved by all present Commissioners.

Commissioner Lee, Epps, Martin thanked the County Administrator and staff for their work on the 2010-2011 budget further stating this was a good budget and process.