

WHITE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES OF THE CALLED MEETING HELD

TUESDAY, JULY 19, 2016 AT 8:00 A.M.

The White County Board of Commissioners held a Called Meeting on Tuesday, July 19, 2016 at 8:00 a.m. in the Board Room at the White County Administration Building. The purpose of the Called Meeting was to review the 2016 Tax Digest and establish the meeting schedule for adoption of the 2016 County Millage Rate. Present at the meeting were: Chairman Travis Turner, Commissioner Terry Goodger, Commissioner Lyn Holcomb, Commissioner Edwin Nix, Commissioner Craig Bryant, County Manager Michael Melton, and County Clerk Shanda Murphy. Finance Director Vicki Mays was not able to attend due to illness.

Chairman Turner called the meeting to order.

Mr. Melton stated that the County received the final digest and the net digest was about \$3 million less than the estimated net digest which was utilized for budget calculations. The estimated digest provided in April 2016 was \$866,772,304 compared to the final net digest received was \$863,623,546 (a difference of \$3,148,758). Mr. Melton stated the decision before the Board was to increase the millage by the amount needed in order to produce the revenue budgeted (9.966 mills / a .858 increase over the rollback of 9.108), to increase the amount of fund balance used to balance the budget, to reduce the expenses within the FY 2017 budget, or a combination of those options. He stated that staff needed direction in order to produce the advertisements required in order to begin the process to set the 2016 millage rate based on the digest received and the budget adopted.

Commissioner Holcomb stated that the FY 2017 Budget increased by \$265,709.00 (1.66%) – which included the additional 6 month's pay increase of \$168,000.00 (as approved at mid FY 2016) and the additional \$78,500.00 for the Park and Recreation above the amount previously budgeted for the YMCA.

A point of clarification was made that the net digest did increase overall - \$858,755,857 to \$863,623,546 – and increase of \$4,867,689, although the digest had not increased as much as anticipated.

Chairman Turner stated that the millage rate had not increased since 2008.

Mr. Melton clarified that the millage rate of 9.966 was based on the approved FY 2017 Budget maintaining 2.5 months fund balance. Chairman Turner stated that he felt strongly about keeping the fund balance at 3 months. He asked the Board to consider that it may take a full mill increase to meet the revenue projections for the FY 2017 Budget and allow a fund balance of 3 months.

Commissioner Nix spoke about the digest lagging behind the actual growth occurring in the County due to the time delay in a project and when the value is applied to the digest.

July 19, 2016 – Called Meeting Minutes (continued)

Chairman Turner asked that the Board consider an increase to 10.108 (.94 over the current millage and 1.0 over the rollback rate) which would meet the revenue budgeted for FY 2017 and bring the fund balance back up to 3 months. Commissioner Holcomb stated that he would like to keep the millage rate below 10.0.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Goodger, seconded by Chairman Turner there was a motion made to proceed forward with a proposed increase of 1 mill over the rollback of 9.108 for a millage rate of 10.108. Commissioner Goodger spoke of how hard the Board had worked to be frugal with county funds and how fund balance had been reduced for several years in order to balance the budget for operational expenses and now was the time that this needed to be done in order to meet the operational needs now and in the future. Commissioner Holcomb, Commissioner Nix, and Commissioner Bryant opposed the motion. Following the 2-3 vote the motion failed.

Commissioner Bryant discussed a possibility of maintaining the current millage rate and utilizing fund balance to make up the \$689,504.00 needed to meet the revenue budgeted for FY 2017. Mr. Melton advised that would reduce fund balance to less than two (2) months.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Goodger, seconded by Commissioner Holcomb there was a motion made to proceed forward with a proposed increase of .858 mill increase over the rollback rate of 9.108 for a millage rate of 9.966. It was noted that this millage rate did reflect the FY 2017 Budget as adopted. Chairman Turner, Commissioner Nix, and Commissioner Bryant opposed the motion. Following the 2-3 vote the motion failed.

Chairman Turner stated that in his blunt opinion the previous motion would not meet the operational needs of the county.

Mr. Billy Chism, White County property owner and Editor of The White County News, expressed that “a tax increase is a tax increase” and if the Board was going to increase taxes the increase should be sufficient to provide what the county departments’ needed in order to provide services to the county.

Sheriff Neal Walden stated that White County is the #3 tourist destination in the State of Georgia – and the county is responsible for providing services for the residents and visitors of our County.

Mr. Bill Johnson with FetchYourNews.com stated the issue was public perception regardless of the amount of the millage increase and the most important thing is for the Board to set a millage that will meet the needs of the County.

Mr. Carl Noon, resident of White County, stated that he respected the Board for being wise stewards, however there had to be a realistic look at the current and future needs of the County.

Chairman Turner stated that both Lumpkin and Habersham Counties have millage rates over 10 mills.

July 19, 2016 – Called Meeting Minutes (continued)

Commissioner Goodger stated that decreasing the fund balance lower than 2.5 months would be jeopardizing the County's current bond rating, which is critical with the financing of future capital projects.

Upon a motion reintroduced by Commissioner Goodger, seconded by Chairman Turner there was a motion made to proceed forward with a proposed increase of 1 mill over the rollback of 9.108 for a millage rate of 10.108. Commissioner Holcomb, Commissioner Nix, and Commissioner Bryant opposed the motion. Following the 2-3 vote the motion failed again.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Holcomb, seconded by Commissioner Goodger there was a motion made to proceed forward with a proposed increase of .83 over the current millage rate / .89 over the rollback rate for a millage rate of 9.998. Chairman Turner voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner Nix and Commissioner Bryant opposed the motion. The motion passed by a 3-2 vote.

The public hearing and meeting schedule was discussed.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Chairman Turner there was a unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting.

The minutes of the July 19, 2016 Called Meeting are hereby approved as stated this 8th day of August, 2016.

WHITE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

s/Travis C. Turner
Travis C. Turner, Chairman

s/Terry D. Goodger
Terry D. Goodger, District 1

s/Lyn Holcomb
Lyn Holcomb, District 2

s/Edwin Nix
Edwin Nix, District 3

s/Craig Bryant
Craig Bryant, District 4

s/Shanda Murphy
Shanda Murphy, County Clerk