

MINUTES

DECATUR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

COMMISSIONERS' BOARD ROOM

PUBLIC HEARING

PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2015, 6:30 PM

PRESENT: CHAIRMAN DENNIS BRINSON, VICE CHAIRMAN PETE STEPHENS, COMMISSIONERS RUSSELL SMITH, RUSTY DAVIS, AND GEORGE ANDERSON, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR ALAN THOMAS, COUNTY ATTORNEY BRUCE KIRBO, COUNTY CLERK BEVERLY KING AND NEWS REPORTERS POWELL COBB AND BRENNAN LEATHERS.

Chairman Brinson called the public hearing on the proposed Millage Rate to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Brinson recognized Frank Geslak. Mr. Geslak asked the commissioners to reconsider increasing the millage rate. Mr. Geslak questioned the procedures that Memorial Hospital had in place to try to collect debts and suggested they try a more efficient way. Mr. Geslak questioned funds that the City of Bainbridge paid toward recreation.

Chairman Brinson recognized Tommy Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds said he was all for recreation for kids, but was confused why there was an emphasis on the recreational areas within the City of Bainbridge and the County's golf course when there are unpaved roads in the southern part of the county that are dangerous to drive on.

Chairman Brinson said he hoped that the County could get to a financial point where capital improvements like paving roads will be an option in the next few years.

Chairman Brinson recognized Basil Lucas. Mr. Lucas commended the Board of Commissioners on the recent project in working with the City of Bainbridge to place a fire truck at the West Bainbridge Station to better serve the citizens. Mr. Lucas raised several questions pertaining to the budget. Perry Henry suggested Mr. Lucas get with him at a later date and he would answer those questions for him.

Chairman Brinson recognized Gary Breedlove. Mr. Breedlove said it was extravagant and overdone to raise the millage rate across the board and referred to his disagreements with the Board of Commissioners during the mediation sessions with the City of Bainbridge.

Vice Chairman Stephens said the only way to decrease taxes was to bring new industry into Decatur County. In order to attract new industry, the County needs a quality hospital, recreation options and a strong education system in place.

Chairman Brinson recognized Darren Deal. Mr. Deal stated that he disagreed with the unincorporated taxation, stating that it should be spread out equally throughout the County and that he felt it was an unfair tax.

Chairman Brinson recognized Billy Walker. Mr. Walker explained the cost of the Affordable Healthcare Act is being funded by putting it on the backs of the small rural hospitals. It's estimated this will reduce federal funding by around 1.7 million over the next two years. These reductions began in FY2014. Other federal and state funding has been cut as a result of their budgets being cut. The indigent care funding from the state has been cut over 50% in the last few years. The hospital building needs an estimated \$5 million worth of infrastructure improvements on its 55 year old building. The hospital could increase charges but that wouldn't mean it would be collected. Medicare and Medicaid tell the hospital what they will pay. Medicare and Medicaid comprise approximately 66% of the total gross revenues and uninsured patients comprise another 11% of total gross revenues. It appears that as the larger hospitals have purchased the smaller hospitals that services and personnel have been cut. Apparently in other communities where the local hospital has been sold, the buying hospital has often times required the local community to still provide funding for indigent care as part of the sales

transaction. Mr. Walker said he hoped in some small way this information might be helpful.

Chairman Brinson recognized Ray Harrell. Mr. Harrell argued that the County needed to manage their money like he manages his own budget, if income is decreased, then the spending should be decreased. Mr. Harrell encouraged the Board to explore every other possible options to avoid raising the millage rate.

Chairman Brinson recognized Dr. Charles Stafford. Dr. Stafford stated that the agreement between Memorial Hospital and Decatur County needed to be renegotiated with some changes made to include some sort of preventive care mechanisms.

Chairman Brinson recognized City Councilman Don Whaley. Mr. Whaley stated that everyone in Decatur County will pay the same taxes for recreation. Mr. Whaley assured the citizens that the City of Bainbridge will continue to contribute funds for recreation. Mr. Whaley said it is a joint effort for all the citizens and he felt recreation is vital for the community.

COMMISSIONERS / ADMINISTRATOR'S REMARKS

Vice Chairman Stephens said the Board struggled with their decisions and it was not easy. Vice Chairman Stephens said he voted for the hospital and recreation funding because it was the right thing to do and he stood by his decision.

Commissioner Smith stated he also supported the hospital and the recreation because it was the right thing to do. Commissioner Smith said he was proud that the County and the City are now working together on projects to better the citizens of Decatur County.

Commissioner Davis thanked all the citizens for coming to the public hearing and voicing their opinions. Commissioner Davis said he was a taxpayer also and he didn't like raising his own taxes but he thought it was what had to be done.

County Administrator Thomas thanked all the citizens for coming to the public hearing and for their input. County Administrator Thomas said he was proud to work together with the City by taking a positive step together in placing a County fire truck at the West Bainbridge Station to help with emergency response times.

Chairman Brinson said there is enough blame to go around for everybody. Chairman Brinson said there is no easy fix but he feels we need the hospital and recreation to attract businesses to our area. Chairman Brinson said he hoped that out of all of this, we will accomplish a better community for all the citizens of Decatur County. Chairman Brinson thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and giving their input, stating their comments are taken to heart.

There being no more participation, the meeting was adjourned.

Approved: _____

Chairman

Attest: _____

County Clerk