

MINUTES

DECATUR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

COMMISSIONERS' BOARD ROOM

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

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

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Brinson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. After the call to order, Chairman Brinson gave the invocation and all those assembled pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Chairman Brinson announced that the Board of Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing on the Proposed Millage Rate at the first part of this regular scheduled meeting. Chairman Brinson opened the floor for citizens to voice their concerns.

Chairman Brinson recognized Gary Breedlove. Mr. Breedlove discussed the events that led up to the millage rate increase through the service delivery strategy mediation. Mr. Breedlove stated this proposed millage rate would be a historical increase, stating there has never been one of this size ever in Decatur County. Mr. Breedlove stated that recreation and hospital funding is not state mandated and in his opinion, no judge would direct the Board of Commissioners to tax their citizens for services that are not required by law.

Chairman Brinson recognized Ted Snell. Mr. Snell stated that the hospital audit showed the largest revenue loss in history that the hospital auditors have ever seen. Mr. Snell recommended that a committee be formed to start discussions in selling the hospital.

Chairman Brinson recognized Doug Griffin. Mr. Griffin said he felt like the unincorporated residents are footing the biggest portion of property taxes, stating that it is absolutely unfair. Mr. Griffin asked the commissioners to explain how the distribution of taxes between Decatur County and the four municipalities is fair and equitable because he didn't see it. Mr. Griffin discussed the Indigent Care Program and the Affordable Care Act.

Chairman Brinson recognized Benny Hayes. Mr. Hayes said he could complain about the increase in taxes but he felt the Board of Commissioners had already made up their mind. Mr. Hayes praised the Board for hiring Alan Thomas back as County Administrator.

Chairman Brinson recognized Hospital Administrator Billy Walker. Mr. Walker explained the procedures for indigent care and how patients qualify for indigent care. Mr. Walker stated that counties are allowed by State Law to raise the millage rate by 7 mills for indigent care but that it is not mandated by State Law.

Commissioner Mosely requested that Mr. Walker work on a plan to help lower the indigent care problem at the hospital. Mr. Walker said changes have been made in personnel and procedures to correct problems in handling accounts and unpaid claims. Old accounts have been outsourced for collection. Mr. Walker stated that over-time has been reduced and they have cut back on expenditures. Mr. Walker stated that he and the Hospital Authority has already made strides and put efforts into remedying the situation. Mr. Walker said he was very comfortable with the plan he has put in place.

Chairman Brinson stated it was time to call the Regular Meeting to order. Commissioner Davis made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Chairman Brinson called the regular scheduled meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Chairman Brinson stated since it was time to call the regular meeting to order and there were still citizens that wanted

to speak during the Public Hearing, he would let them speak first.

Chairman Brinson recognized Steven Wells. Mr. Wells asked if anyone has prayed about the tax situation. Mr. Wells spoke about concerns he had with the tax increase, stating the people did not want this and the majority of citizens are on a fixed income and simply can't afford an increase. Mr. Wells asked if anything has been done to try to get businesses to come to Decatur County instead of having to raise property taxes.

AMENDMENTS / APPROVAL OF AGENDA

County Administrator Thomas asked the Board to approve the following amendment: Add to New Business; Consider Approval of Motorola Service Contract. Vice Chairman Stephens made a motion to approve the agenda with this amendment. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

There were no Special Presentations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chairman Brinson recognized Reverend Stanley Phillips. Reverend Phillips spoke of concerns for citizens who are hurting financially in Decatur County. Reverend Phillips stated that Decatur County is dying, people are leaving and not coming back. Reverend Phillips stated that single parents in households and senior citizens won't be able to pay these tax increases. Reverend Phillips stated that he agreed with the school taxes and helping the hospital but recreation is not a necessity and he don't see how recreation has anything to do with bringing businesses into Decatur County.

Chairman Brinson recognized Frank Geslak. Mr. Geslak stated that his property taxes have increased 49% since he moved to Decatur County. Mr. Geslak stated that he disagreed with recreational funding when there were so many other things that Decatur County needed, such as improvements to the Industrial Park so that it would attract businesses to come to Decatur County. Mr. Geslak said he would be praying that the Board of Commissioners would make the right decisions.

Chairman Brinson recognized Ted Snell. Mr. Snell stated that his taxes were going to be increased by approximately \$400.00 if the proposed millage rate is approved. Mr. Snell spoke of concerns for the senior citizens that wouldn't be able to afford a tax increase. Mr. Snell said he believed there should be discussions on selling the hospital.

APPROVE MINUTES

Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting and Public Hearing on Millage Rate held September 8, 2015; the minutes of the Public Hearing on Comprehensive Plan held September 8, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.; and the minutes of the Public Hearing on Millage Rate held September 8, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Approval of Resolution to Set the Millage Rate. Vice Chairman Stephens made a motion to approve the Resolution to Set the Millage Rate. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. A vote was taken and approved with a 5 to 1 vote. Commissioner Anderson opposed.

Consider Approval of Proposal from Harbin Engineering to Assist Decatur County in Obtaining a Surface Mining Permit for the Landfill. Chairman Brinson recognized County Administrator Alan Thomas. County Administrator Thomas stated that this will allow Decatur County to use borrowed material from land that is in the Decatur County Landfill property area,

but is outside the approved landfill site. It will allow raw material to be used on that site as Cell 5 is being developed. Harbin Engineering will assist Decatur County in retaining a surveyor to prepare a boundary survey for only the proposed offsite borrow area. County Administrator Thomas stated the proposed agreement was in the amount of \$15,000.00 and recommended the Board approve this proposal. Commissioner Mosely made a motion to approve this proposal from Harbin Engineering in the amount of \$15,000.00. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Consider Approval of Increasing the Supplements for the Superior Court Judges. Chairman Brinson recognized County Administrator Alan Thomas. County Administrator Thomas stated he received a letter from the Superior Court Judges requesting that the five counties that comprise the South Georgia Judicial Circuit increase the supplements that are paid to the Superior Court Judges. The last time Decatur County approved an increase in the Judges' supplement was in 2005. Mitchell and Grady Counties have already approved the increase and they are asking all the other counties to approve it as well. The percentage of each county's part has generally been determined according to the population of that County and this request is based on that premise. The proposed increase is going from \$6,930.00 to \$9,200.00 per year. Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve this request. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Consider Approval of Motorola Service Contract. Chairman Brinson recognized E-911 Director Tonya Griffin. Ms. Griffin stated this was the service contract from Motorola that begins October 1, 2015 and ends September 30, 2016. This contract is shared with Grady County, Decatur County Board of Education and City of Bainbridge. Each entity will be billed for their portion. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve this contract. Commissioner Anderson seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

COMMISSIONERS / ADMINISTRATOR'S REMARKS

Vice Chairman Stephens thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for their comments. Vice Chairman Stephens said the only way to decrease taxes was to bring new industry to Decatur County and he believed it was vital to have a quality hospital and recreation to attract new industry. Vice Chairman Stephens said he struggled in making the decision to raise taxes but he thinks it is the right thing to do under the circumstances they are in.

Commissioner Smith stated that he agreed with everything Vice Chairman Stephens said and that he had no further comments.

Commissioner Mosely said doing what you think is the right thing is often difficult. Commissioner Mosely said as bad as he hates to see what has transpired, he feels like the Board did the right thing and that he stands by his vote.

Commissioner Davis said the City has done a great job funding recreation with little to no help from the County over the years. This millage increase is the fairest way in his opinion to cover all the citizens of Decatur County. Commissioner Davis said the City has funded recreation for all kids including Decatur County and he thinks this is the fair thing to do.

County Administrator Thomas expressed his appreciation for the participation from the citizens.

Chairman Brinson stated when you are broke, you start looking for money in various places. As a result of that, a recreation authority and a hospital authority is created because as a Board, those are the things that will help move this County forward. It is the Board of Commissioners' job to make the right decisions moving forward and Chairman Brinson stated he believed the right decision was made tonight. Chairman Brinson thanked all the citizens for expressing their concerns and that he heard every one of them and they are taken to heart.


Reverend John Thomas gave an Invocation.

Commissioner Mosely made a motion to go into executive session to discuss Personnel. Commissioner Anderson seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

After the executive session the Commissioners assembled back in the board room. Commissioner Anderson made a motion to go into regular session. Vice Chairman Stephens seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Chairman Brinson stated the Board discussed several personnel matters during executive session that pertained to Board members. Commissioner Mosely made a motion to appoint Jim Beck to the Board of Health. Vice Chairman Stephens seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

There being no further business, the meeting, on motion by Commissioner Anderson, was duly adjourned. Commissioner Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved.

Approved: 
Chairman

Attest: 
County Clerk