

**BALDWIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2021
10:00 A.M.
1601 NORTH COLUMBIA STREET, SUITE 220**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Henry Craig
John Westmoreland
Kendrick Butts
Emily Davis
Sammy Hall

OTHERS PRESENT

David Mcree
Carlos Tobar
Dawn Hudson
Jill Adams

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Henry Craig called the public hearing to order at 10:00 a.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE / FISCAL MATTERS

Public Hearing on Proposed Property Tax Increase

Chair Craig opened the Public Hearing for discussion of a proposed property tax increase.

Assistant County Manager Dawn Hudson made the following presentation regarding the proposed property tax increase:

Ms. Hudson stated this public hearing is one of three required hearings on a proposed millage rate increase. She explained the state formula that calculates the rollback rate. She stated the current rate is 9.83; the rollback rate is 9.64 and the proposed rate is 10.5.

Ms. Hudson then presented information about the impact of the proposed increase on a \$100,000.00 homestead property which will be \$25.80 and a non-homestead property of \$34.40. She discussed local revenue sources stating that 85% of County revenue comes from taxes. Ms. Hudson also discussed mandated services; required services and discretionary services that are provided by the County. 85% of services are mandated by the State of Georgia and 15% are discretionary services; but, these are services most citizens want such as animal control, roads & bridges. She discussed budget impacts such as rising costs of supplies, fuel, utilities, increased costs for public safety and EMS, stormwater fees, elections requirements and the loss of revenue due to the State cancelling the Central State Hospital Fire Contract.

Ms. Hudson opened the floor for questions and comments from Commissioners and the public.

The following people addressed the Board regarding the proposed tax increase.

Ricky Giles – stated there is a lot of new construction going on in the County which would provide more tax revenue to County. He stated people can't afford to keep paying more for everything especially when everyone has been hit so hard because of the pandemic. He asked the Board to be mindful of how people are suffering because of high prices when they make the decision to implement a tax increase.

Chairman Craig responded Commissioners realize how serious the situation is because expenses have gone up on everybody. He stated the County has avoided this for many years; however, with additional expenses the County must find a way to find additional revenue to continue to provide services. He reported as discussed earlier 85% of services are mandated by the State of Georgia.

Vice Chairman Westmoreland stated the tax increase would bring in an additional \$1 million dollars in revenue and the presentation showed additional \$1.1 million in expenditures that will be necessary to provide services in the coming year. Commissioner Hall stated new construction going on in the County now will not show up on digest until 2022, and construction not complete until 2022 won't be recognized until 2023.

Chairman Craig recognized Wade Williams, Chief Appraiser, to comment on the timing of revenue on the digest. Chief Appraiser Williams stated by law the County is required to conduct reassessments every 3 years.

Commissioner Davis asked for further explanation on storm water fees that Ms. Hudson mentioned in the presentation. Ms. Hudson responded the County must pay the City of Milledgeville storm water fees on all County facilities located in the City.

Commissioner Hall stated the Board of Education tax is a large part of a property tax bill; not only the County tax. He stated 70% of counties in the State have higher tax rates than Baldwin County.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Hall made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 10:30 a.m. Vice Chairman Westmoreland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Henry R. Craig
Chairman



Cynthia K. Cunningham
County Clerk