



## BALDWIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, August 23, 2021

Government Building, Suite 220, 1601 N Columbia St  
6:00 PM

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### MINUTES

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Henry Craig  
John Westmoreland  
Kendrick Butts  
Sammy Hall

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Emily Davis

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

David Mcree  
Carlos Tobar  
Dawn Hudson  
Jill Adams  
Cindy Cunningham

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Henry Craig called the public hearing to order at 6:00 p.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.

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.

Vice Chairman Westmoreland stated the cost of providing services has increased for the County as well as it has for businesses and individuals. The County must continue to provide services and pay what it costs to provide these services.

Chairman Craig stated the presentation given by Assistant County Manager Hudson outlined where revenue comes from and where it is spent. Baldwin County is a constitutional government of the State of Georgia and must provide certain services mandated by the State. Mandated services make up 85% of all County expenditures with only 15% being discretionary services. He stated the County can't continue to provide all services with a tax increase. The Central State Hospital Fire Contract in the amount of \$600,000 was cancelled by the State. The County is litigating this with the State; however, we must continue to pay for these fire services until such time as a decision is rendered. Chairman Craig stated that since 2014 Commissioners have been successful in holding a line on property tax; however, many issues now mandate a different course of action.

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

Pam Peacock – asked Commissioners to not make a hasty decision to raise taxes. She questioned additional costs for testing voting machine, increase in trash pickup fees, and use of tax dollars to purchase property.

Travis Strickland – stated he would like to address the proposed property tax increase from a financial standpoint, a landlord/property owner standpoint and a tax appeal situation. He said now is not the time for a property tax increase.

Mary Divitorio – asked for further explanation for the need of a property tax increase and where money is being spent. She questioned whether tax dollars could have been spent more wisely because now is a bad time to propose a property tax increase on citizens who have everything else costing more.

Bill Chase – discussed the fact citizens can freeze the property value on a house at age 60 and on the house plus 10 acres at age 65. When his property value was frozen at age 65 property value increased 30% because the house was reassessed at that time. Disagrees with this. Recommended that only essential services be provided. Any other services should be paid for by user fees. Reminded Commissioners they must be good stewards of the tax payers money.

Commissioners responded to remind everyone that 85% of services are mandated by the State. There have been increased costs in elections, EMS, and fire services due to CSH fire contract being cancelled. They reiterated the County must provide services and continue to operate with limited reserves.


### **CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING**

Commissioner Hall made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:55 p.m. Vice Chairman Westmoreland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Butts made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Vice Chairman Westmoreland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Henry R. Craig  
Chairman

  
Cynthia K. Cunningham  
County Clerk