

## WHITE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### MINUTES FROM PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED BUDGET

OF JUNE 19, 2008, AT 9:00 A.M.

The White County Board of Commissioners conducted a Public Hearing on June 19, 2008, at 9:00 A.M. in the Grand Jury Room of the White County Courthouse. Present were Chairman Chris R. Nonnemaker, Post 1 Commissioner Joe Campbell, Post 2 Commissioner Craig Bryant, Chief Financial Officer Vickie Neikirk, and County Clerk Jean Welborn.

Chairman Nonnemaker called the public hearing to order. Vickie Neikirk gave a presentation on the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2008-2009. (See copies of presentation.) Copies of the proposed budget were distributed (see copy attached).

The Board of Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Ms. Neikirk for her hard work in getting the budget together as well as the Department Heads. Ms. Neikirk also expressed her appreciation to the Department Heads, her staff and to Shanda Smallwood, the HR Director, for their assistance.

Commissioner Campbell stated that this budget process was the closest budget he had been involved with as a Commissioner; that the economic turn-down that everyone was experiencing was affecting this; that fuel costs affect almost every department; that health insurance was going up about 12% also. Commissioner Campbell commended all the department heads who have tried to stay in budget; that some even came in under budget; that they take this very seriously, holding the line on every dollar; that the County was very fortunate that they were not having to cut positions; that if the economy kept going south, he felt that that would be the next thing – cutting positions.

Vickie Neikirk stated that she felt the County was doing very well to do what it does with only a 3% increase in the budget. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the Board of Commissioners had implemented a hiring freeze. Chairman Nonnemaker asked if that was correct; that the Board of Commissioners had talked about a hiring freeze so that there would be no new hires at this point.

Commissioner Bryant stated that he had attended the City of Helen meeting on Tuesday night; that the County's information concerning the City of Helen's SPLOST balances was incorrect; that the original report showed that the City had a balance in the sewer portion of the current SPLOST of \$1.5 million; that they really had \$917,000; that the City had spent roughly \$600,000 of that; that the City had projects underway to spend the rest of the money and they had some other projects.

Jerry Elkins, Manager for the City of Helen, addressed the Board of Commissioners concerning the City's monthly SPLOST report. Mr. Elkins presented reports to the Board of Commissioners on SPLOST projects, with projected revenues and grants, etc.; that the memo that was presented to the Board of Commissioners on March 3, 2008 explained what the City had at that time and what the projected SPLOST would be; that since that time, the City had received another grant for sidewalk work in the City.

Chairman Nonnemaker stated that the Board of Commissioners had stated at the meeting on June 11 that they would take a look at some money (\$3 million) earmarked for Park and Recreation; that he had expressed his personal opinion that they needed to keep \$1.5 million for a new gym for the Park and Rec.; that they could take the other \$1.5 million and divide it between the cities; that Commissioner Campbell had made another recommendation; that Commissioner Bryant wanted to go to the City's meeting before making a decision.

Commissioner Bryant stated that he had talked with the City officials; that they had projects; that he understood the frustration on their part, as well as on the County's part;

Minutes from First Public Hearing on Budget held June 19, 2008, Continued

that the City of Cleveland was about to spend some of the Roads and Bridges SPLOST on sidewalks; that the City of Cleveland assured him that they were going to open up the sewer line once they got the new sewer project on the south side complete. Chairman Nonnemaker asked if the availability of sewer would be dependant upon the annexation into the City. Commissioner Bryant stated that that was not mentioned as a contingency.

Commissioner Bryant stated that he did not have a problem splitting the \$1.5 million with the cities.

Teresa Stansel stated that she felt that the Board of Commissioners should go back to the drawing board on the budget and make more cuts; that there was talk of a global depression; that the County could get ahead of that curve; that there was also talk of currency intervention, which would require an entity to move to international currency, which they did to Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, etc.; that grants would not be there; that to protect the people, the budget needed to be cut more.

Chairman Nonnemaker stated that fees needed to be raised at Park and Rec. and Building Inspections. Ms. Stansel did not agree that the burden should be put back on the people; that this would not help the problem. Chairman Nonnemaker stated that these were user fees, not a general tax. Ms. Stansel stated that the paper system was not going to work; that they needed to raise the gold and silver issue; that it was public law; that they should put any reserves that the county could hold for three months into gold and silver coins, which went up last year 35%. Ms. Stansel asked how much the County would lose in interest. Ms. Stansel asked Ms. Neikirk if the \$80,000 was correct. Ms. Neikirk stated that it was because they cashed them in.

There being no further questions, the public hearing was adjourned.

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Chris R. Nonnemaker, Chairman

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Joe Campbell, Post 1

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Craig Bryant, Post 2

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Jean Welborn, County Clerk