

Proposed Millage Rate, Tentative Budget, VAB Information WORKSHOP

Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
July 21, 2022 – 3:00 – 5:00 PM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.

COMMISSIONERS

Jody Stephenson, District 1
W. C. Mills, District 2, Vice Chairman
Jamie Storey, District 4, Chairman
James Valentine, District 5

STAFF

Duane Cannon, County Manager via telephone
Paul Gainey, Asst. County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, Interim County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Della Rhymes, Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk
Jacki Johnson, Chief Financial Officer

CALL TO ORDER

The Board Meeting/Workshop was called to order at 3:00 PM by Commissioner Storey.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

The Invocation was led by Commissioner Valentine and the Pledge to the American Flag was led by Commissioner Hatch.

PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE

Chief Financial Officer Jacki Johnson appeared before the Board to present the items of discussion.

She informed the Board that the tax roll has been certified as of July 01, 2022 by the Property Appraiser. She said these numbers will be entered into the TRIM calculations and then determine what the roll back rate is.

She clarified the roll back rate is the amount of proceeds generated from the prior year to be able to compare this year to last year. She presented the Board with calculated options for 2022 of the General Fund, the EMS Fund and the Library Fund for discussion of a proposed Millage Rate.

GENERAL REVENUE FUND

Ms. Johnson presented the proposed figures for the Board to review and discuss for the General Fund which consisted of choices ranging from 9.5000, 9.6000, 9.8000 and 10.000 as the maximum proposed millage rate.

She informed the Board that property values have increased.

Commissioner Storey stated that last year the county was at 10 mils. He asked if this rate was left at 10 mils, how much money would be generated.

Ms. Johnson replied about \$600,000.00.

Commissioner Storey asked how much money the county needs to cover the new salaries.

Ms. Johnson replied about \$300,000.00 more than last year.

Commissioner Hatch asked if some of this money is covered under the new assessment.

Ms. Johnson replied some of it is covered.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey stated that the retirement money that was not previously paid for the part-time employees is needed.

Commissioner Hatch asked about the ARPA money.

Ms. Johnson replied that ½ is used for EMS which is \$673,000.00. The other ½ will be received in August of 2022 and is earmarked for other things.

Commissioner Storey asked about the Sheriff's office covering new salaries and the Clerk needing money for digitizing records.

County Manager Duane Cannon spoke to the Board via telephone. He said that \$240,000.00 has been earmarked for the Clerk, and \$400,000.00 has been earmarked for the Sheriff's office with the balance going to the Storm Water Task Force,

Commissioner Hatch said he hates to max out at 10 mils.

Commissioner Storey suggested going no lower than 9.6 to cover the additional money that's needed.

Ms. Johnson said somewhere in between would be good and they are still in the budget process.

Ms. Johnson informed the Board that the county has received a notice that there will be a Florida Retirement Savings, FRS, Audit.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey said the mils would need to be at 9.6 or 9.7 to cover the amounts of money they know is needed.

Ms. Johnson said the discretionary revenue projections for last year were 1.1 million.

She said the county will be getting \$350,000.00 less this year.

Commissioner Stephenson said the county needs to be in a better financial position than just survival mode.

Commissioner Hatch said that stability is needed.

Ms. Johnson said the Recreation and Library Fund needs about \$130,000.00 from the General Fund. She said that EMS may need some money from General Fund. She said that the Road Department and 911 Communications may need some money from General Fund as well. She said the library has budgeted a new roof for \$40,000.00. She said there are still some unknowns at this point.

Commissioner Storey said the Property Appraiser's office also has an issue with the Courthouse roof leaking in their area. He said there may be more areas that are leaking.

Ms. Johnson said there is more liability with older buildings.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey said the property values may drop next year. He said the 9.6 and 9.8 mills would be the target spot.

Commissioner Storey said they should continue the budget research.

Commissioner Hatch said since 2011 or 2012 the millage rate was rolled back. He stated that the county needs to be more cautious and do better at researching the needs before they spend the money. He said the equipment needs to be maintained better instead of just replacing everything with new ones.

Ms. Johnson said it is hard to balance maintenance costs versus the costs of purchasing something new.

Commissioner Stephenson spoke about a lease purchase and buy back agreement for equipment. He said this stipulation is in the contract and the equipment can be rotated so that you always have newer equipment. He said the equipment provider handles all the maintenance, as well.

Commissioner Hatch said the money comes from the millage rate.

Commissioner Stephenson said better planning is needed.

Ms. Jacki said you need the employees to be productive and the equipment to be working properly.

Commissioner Hatch said he feels it has been a good idea to include the Supervisors and Department Heads in the budget process so they can see and know what is going on and how it affects them.

Ms. Johnson agreed.

Ms. Johnson said the Board will need to decide on a proposed millage rate at the regular meeting tonight.

Commissioner Hatch said the Board needs to consider the property value increase and the assessment increase along with a cushion for next year in their decision tonight.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended the 9.8 proposed millage rate for General Fund and then get some more budget numbers would show a good faith effort.

Ms. Johnson agreed with this recommendation.

EMS FUND-MSTU

Ms. Johnson presented the proposed figures for the Board to review and discuss for the EMS Fund which consisted of choices ranging from 2.6000, 3.2000, 3.4070 and 3.7477 as the maximum proposed millage rate.

She reminded the Board they had to use \$673,000.00 of ARPA money to balance the budget last year because they did not increase the millage rate. She said this will have to be made up along with the salary increase and the retirement money and the fuel costs, etc. She said the county will need \$800,000.00 to \$900,000.00 to break even.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about the assessment.

Ms. Johnson clarified that the EMS and Fire Budgets are separate from each other and the assessment and Fire budget will not help the EMS budget.

Director Darian Brown explained to the Board how the money is gathered between the millage rate and the assessment for each budget. He said that they are separated. He said they lost six positions from EMS to the Fire Department to help the Fire budget. He said the EMS budget was \$700,000.00 short at that time. He said the cost of fuel, retirement and pay raises, operating costs, etc. is not decreasing.

Commissioner Storey asked how much money is needed.

Director Brown replied for the Fire to balance \$7,000.00 to \$10,000.00 is needed. He said that EMS will need \$900,000.00 or more to balance. He said some part-time positions were converted to full-time positions to help. He said they will not be able to man a fifth ambulance and the second Fire truck will be short on staff.

Commissioner Hatch said he hates to max out at 10 mils however they do need a cushion.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended a proposed rate at 3.7477 would be close to break even and the balance would come from the General Fund.

Commissioner Storey said the General Fund would still have to cover \$200,000.00.

Director Brown said they are still working on the numbers and they have cut costs everywhere possible. He said the fuel bill is up to \$20,000.00 per month. He said they have budget from \$5.00 per gallon up to \$7.00 a gallon. He said operating supplies are down \$40,000.00 by removing the fuel costs.

Ms. Johnson said they have already discussed increasing the fees for the EMS responding to calls. She said that collections are better.

Commissioner Hatch asked for her recommendation.

Ms. Johnson replied 3.4070 up to the maximum rate.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended increasing to 3.6 which would be \$821,000.00 more.

Ms. Johnson said that 1 mill equals the value of \$661,000.00.

Commissioner Hatch if any more operational costs can be cut or done differently to save more money.

Director Brown replied they review and evaluate this all the time. He said they can cut back on oxygen costs. He said the Old Town Station can be remodeled. He said they can cut back on truck chassis or purchases due to demand and availability. He said they are reviewing their uniform costs.

Commissioner Hatch discussed the amount of staff needed to respond to a scene. Director Brown said that is hard to assess, but they have been re evaluating a lot of scenarios. He said they are creating a staging area in Old Town for supplies and re-stocking of the trucks, so they don't have to come back to Cross City.

Commissioner Hatch said the public does not know or see these things and they need to be made aware.

Ms. Johnson said that she has seen costs saving improvements in all departments.

Commissioner Hatch discussed the separation of Fire and EMS, positions and salaries. Director Brown said six positions went to the Fire Department from the EMS Department last year. He said it cost \$30,000.00 to add three full-time positions. He said the calls have increased another 500 calls this year. He said they still need more staff.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended a 3.6 proposed millage rate. Ms. Johnson agreed this recommendation would get them closer.

RECREATION AND LIBRARY FUND-MSTU

Ms. Johnson presented the proposed figures for the Board to review and discuss for the Recreation and Library Fund which consisted of choices ranging from .4000, .5000, and .5768 as the maximum proposed millage rate.

She said the .4000 rate would be \$264,487.00 and the difference comes from General Fund to balance the budget. She said the Parks and Boat Ramps and Library are covered under this. She said the shortage is about \$129,000.00. She said the Library also needs a new roof.

Commissioner Hatch asked County Manager Duane Cannon about the Road Department doing maintenance on buildings and boat ramps and signs, etc. He asked if this is itemized and are these costs being separated from their budget to be fair.

Manager Cannon replied yes, it is itemized and separated per job. He said that each building has a budget for operation and maintenance.

Commissioner Hatch asked about rental fees on the buildings. He mentioned there are buildings that are free of charge and others they charge for. He asked about the maintenance fees and costs difference.

Manager Cannon said the Horseshoe Park and the Shirred park break even compared to others. He said the rentals fees for some properties don't cover all the costs.

The Board discussed the rentals fees and costs differences and shortages of several county owned buildings and community centers and parks.

Commissioner Hatch said the General Fund can't continue to prop up other departments and fund their accounts.

Commissioner Stephenson said you can't get everything for free. He said the county is a business.

Interim County Attorney Chana Watson recommended a contractual agreement and a security deposit is needed, along with the rent, when events are scheduled.

The Board discussed scheduling, managing, cleaning, and the amenities provided at these county owned properties.

Ms. Cindy Bellot informed the Board that this has been set at .4 mills since 1961 and has never been changed.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended the \$129,000.00 shortage could be covered by increasing the rate by 1 mill and can generate more from raising the park rental rates.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that maintenance department at the parks are only charging for materials and not for labor. She said this may need to be addressed and handled differently.

*Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey recommended .5 mills for the proposed millage rate.
Ms. Johnson said they could work with the proposed millage rate of .5 mills.*

Commissioner Hatch asked about the 2021 Audit.

Ms. Johnson replied the Auditors were here working on the Tax Collector and the Clerk. She said she doesn't think they have completed the Board Audit and she is following up with that. She said they are three weeks late on the 2021 Audit. She said she feels they will be close to completion of 2021 by August.

Commissioner Hatch said then they will be caught up with audits until June, 2023.

Ms. Johnson replied yes. She said the goal is for 2022 to start in November and December.

Ms. Brenda Royal added that if they can get a list of things needed in advance from the auditors, they can start gathering information ahead of time and speed up the process.

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD

Asst. Chief Deputy Clerk Della Rhymes presented some information to the Board regarding the Value Adjustment Board. She requested they review this and make some decisions in the Regular Board Meeting regarding members to serve in the various positions. She said after that, they can move forward with scheduling the Organizational Meeting and others as needed.

Asst. County Manager Paul Gainey reminded the Board that the County Manager is out of town; however, he will be in attendance by phone tonight. He said he has a prior commitment to attend and will not be at the regular board meeting tonight. He said that Ms. Martha McCaskill will be presenting on behalf of the County Manager's office. He requested that County Manager Report be moved to the beginning of the Agenda so that Ms. Jacki Johnson may answer any questions on the proposed millage rates.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Stephenson made the motion to adjourn at 4:40 PM. Commissioner Hatch seconded. Board approved.



ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA



Jamie Storey, Chairman



Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

“Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771.”

The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.