
Houston County Commissioners Meeting**August 15, 2023****Warner Robins, Georgia**

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in special called meeting at 9:00 am on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, GA, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, and Robinson present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Director of Animal Control Alan Smith, and Administrative Secretary Dawn Wilkins.

Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar gave the Invocation.

County Attorney Tom Hall led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Perdue opened the meeting welcoming everyone and thanking them for being there. He then gave a presentation of the proposed 2023 millage rate with a focus on four options that the Board could choose from: a complete rollback to 9.066 mills, hold steady at the current 9.810 millage rate, increase the millage rate to 9.811 mills to remain at the tax cap, or another option all together. He then presented considerations the Board needed to examine regarding funding variables: property tax is the most reliable revenue source, collection could vary, impact to the fire millage rate, reserves that Houston County enjoys, and reevaluations of real property. Chairman Perdue stated the recommendation that the Board was examining included a roll back of the millage rate by .249 mills which will allow the county to operate judiciously and at the same time offer a little property tax relief for the citizens. In conclusion Chairman Perdue presented a rundown of the millage rate history for the last 6 years in Houston County.

Chairman Perdue closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened a Public Hearing.

Larry Baxter asked the board the difference between reserve fund and contingency fund.

Chairman Perdue replied that the contingency fund was budgeted yearly to cover short term ongoing projects, and that the reserve budget is for long term unforeseen problems.

Mr. Baxter asked how the funds were budgeted.

Chairman Perdue replied that the number of days in the reserve fund need to grow as the budget grows so the number of funded days remain the same.

Mr. Baxter asked regarding the tax assessed value on properties how under evaluated the County was currently.

Chairman Perdue spoke about appraised value versus assessed value and explained that the State Department of Audits pulls sales and assessed values and that the County is currently under evaluated and that the State gives us three years to solve the problem before it invalidates our Tax Digest.

Ms. Yvette Brown thanked the Commissioners for holding these meetings and giving the public a chance to speak. She then spoke of her mortgage payment increasing and not understanding how if the millage rate was being rolled back her payment was going up.

Chairman Perdue stated that not having all the information on her situation that he could not answer completely but that he would be shocked if it was only the tax increase raising her property value, that the estimated increase on a \$200,000. dollar home was expected to be \$50.

Ms. Brown asked about Sales Tax versus Property Tax for funding.

Chairman Perdue stated that currently the county sales tax is at 7% and of that the County receives 1% with the rest going to education, and the state. He then spoke of SPLOST, TSPLOST and ESPLOST and how SPLOST funds Capital Projects and cannot be used for the day-to-day running of the County.

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Ms. Brown asked if there would be a revaluation in the future.

Chairman Perdue replied that the State has required a revaluation, that their audit showed we are not within the guidelines they set, that we are currently under their requirements of the appraised to assessed value ratio.

There being no further comments Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Chairman perdue mentioning the dates and times of the next public hearings on the millage rate Tuesday, August 15th at 6:00 pm at the Houston County Annex on Carl Vinson Parkway in Warner Robins. He thanked all the people present for their participation in the process. He stated that he enjoyed the questions. He stated that we are in unprecedented times in regard to property values in this County and that we are all learning as we get further into the process.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Commissioner Comments.

Mr. Gottwals stated he appreciated everyone being here and going through the process with us. That it is hard to sit here saying we are lowering taxes when more money is coming out of people's budgets. He said we are a product of our own success, that the county is growing by leaps and bounds and that property values are going to rise as a result. That the Boards job is to do what is best for the citizens and he feels that with this roll back they had.

Ms. Robinson thanked those who attended and participated in the meeting and gave their input. She also mentioned that she agreed with the Chairman, the roll back being the right thing to do for both the citizens and the County.

Mr. Byrd thanked those who asked questions stating that they were on point with the challenges the Board faced in making the decision to roll back the millage rate. With inflation affecting the cost of providing services and running the County that this was the best solution. He thanked staff for presenting a budget and employees for staying within the budget making this possible roll back possible.

Chairman Perdue agreed with the comments made and thanked everyone for taking part.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner
Commissioner Talton was not
present so he does not sign.
Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner