

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
June 14, 2022
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Called Meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday June 14, 2022, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Robinson, and Walker present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Community Planner Jake Cox, Fire/HEMA Chief Stoner, Centerville Mayor John Harley, Dan Perdue, Jacqueline Rozier

Chairman Stalnaker announced that newly elected Commissioner Talton will not be present due to a long-scheduled vacation, but he will be at the next meeting on June 21st.

County Attorney Tom Hall led the audience in the Invocation.

Director of Administration Barry Holland led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Stalnaker reminded everyone of the regular scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 21st at 5:00 p.m. at the County Annex Building in Warner Robins at which time the Board will adopt the FY23 budget.

Chairman Stalnaker then presented a general summary of the proposed FY23 budget stating that if more detail was desired by anyone that is certainly available as the Board's goal is complete transparency. He remarked that as tough as it was to prepare, we are very fortunate to be in the fiscal position we are in and thanked the dedicated constitutional officers, elected officials, department heads and employees for the current FY22 budget management maintaining expenses and collecting revenue. We expect to be within our total budgeted expenditures and meet our total projected revenues for FY22. We will know if we have truly had another sound fiscal year when final numbers are determined in September or October. The County's fiscal year audit will be completed in December. He thanked all department heads for their very realistic budget requests noting that each complied with the instructions from the Commissioner's office to hold the line. Initial budget requests indicated that the budget was several million dollars out of balance. It is not uncommon to be \$2 to \$4 million out of balance at the beginning of the process. Overall, Houston County is in sound financial shape as we have been able to maintain our fund balance and have no general obligation debt. This proposed balanced budget is offered with no anticipated millage rate increase. The Board is extremely proud of that accomplishment. He reminded everyone that the County's ability to raise the millage rate is greatly restricted by the tax cap as well. The millage rate is less than one mill from the tax cap currently and with the growth we have experienced it will probably shrink that gap even further. Salary adjustments were made last month at a cost of \$2.9 million and those funds are programmed into the FY23 budget. The proposed FY23 budget is \$68,838,521 and the FY22 amended budget is \$68,192,979. This is only a \$645,542 increase from FY22 to FY23. The SPLOST program, which generates funds for capital needs in the County, has been a huge help to the County and all three cities. Again, the proposed budget does include recruitment and retention salary adjustments which were made by the Board in May of 2022 at a cost of \$2.9 million.

We will continue to look for sustainable opportunities for additional employees and compression reduction in salaries. The proposed budget also includes a contingency of approximately \$1.6 million which is needed for unanticipated emergencies; some fall back should the tax digest and other revenues return less than anticipated. This amount represents less than 2.3% of the total General Fund budget. Normally we have \$1 million as the contingency and the \$600,000 that has been added to it in the proposed budget is in anticipation of being able to make some kind of cost of living pay adjustment for employees during the year. We will know by the September or October timeframe if that will be possible. He estimated that the millage rate for calendar year or tax year 2022, supporting the FY23 budget, will remain at 9.935 mills with the Fire millage remaining at 1.177 mills. The General Fund has been supported by a millage that has remained at or below 9.95 mills for thirteen consecutive years and the Fire tax has remained at 1.18 mills or below for sixteen consecutive years. In 1990, the millage rate was at 8.97 mills and 32 years later, there has been less than a one mill increase. The sole exception being in 2009 when the voters supported a one-year temporary increase to 10.45 mills to cover the cost of the Code Red Early Warning System. Houston County continues to have the lowest millage rate in middle Georgia which range from 23.11 to 38.43 mills. The 23.11 is the Board of Commissioners millage plus the Board of Education's. The Chairman thanked all elected officials, department directors, employees, fellow commissioners, and most of all the taxpayers because without the cooperation and support from all we would not have reached a balanced budget for FY23.

He then gave a detailed presentation highlighting the General Fund Budget, as well as the various enterprise and special revenue funds. The total proposed budget of \$163,316,202 is broken down as \$68,838,521 General Fund; \$4,900,293 E911 Fund; \$3,488,686 Fire District Fund; \$52,769,151 SPLOST Fund; \$8,554,000 Water Fund; \$10,735,890 Solid Waste Fund; \$13,324,661 Internal Service Fund; and \$705,000 Special Revenue Funds.

Chairman Stalnaker once again thanked all employees, department directors, elected officials and constitutional officers for doing their part. He reiterated that without the cooperation and support from each we would not have reached this balanced budget for FY23. He thanked Barry Holland, Sandi Stalnaker, Jake Cox, and everyone involved for the hard work during the long budget process.

Chairman Stalnaker opened the floor for Commissioner's Comments.

Mr. Byrd thanked the Chairman for the clear, concise, and thorough presentation of the FY23 budget as well as his expertise over the twelve years he has been in his leadership role. He also thanked Barry Holland and Sandi Stalnaker and the department heads throughout the County for their efficient operation of County government which allows us to get to this point. The goal to provide quality services to the citizens in an efficient manner is represented in this proposed budget and he is proud of that as well. To bring a General Fund budget in with less than one percent growth in a rising cost environment is very impressive.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone who participated in the preparation of the proposed budget especially Chairman Stalnaker, Barry Holland, and Sandi Stalnaker, as well as all the department heads for putting together a great budget. She remarked that she is thankful to be in Houston County and thankful to be able to serve the public.

Houston County Commissioners Meeting Continued from Page 70

Mr. Walker remarked that Chairman Stalnaker has managed to streamline the budget process during his tenure. He congratulated everyone involved in the process for doing a super job. He thanked the taxpayers of Houston County for supporting the SPLOST because without it a lot of what has been accomplished would not have been possible.

Chairman Stalnaker then closed the regular meeting and opened a public hearing on proposed FY23 budget:

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Centerville Mayor John Harley and thanked him for coming. He expressed his appreciation for Mayor Harley and the City of Centerville for their part in making Houston County what it is today.

Jacqueline Rozier, 317 Dunbar Road, asked if the \$14 million roads infrastructure projects funded by the SPLOST in the proposed FY23 budget had already been defined or was there some flexibility on what projects those funds could be expended.

Chairman Stalnaker explained that specific road projects were approved by the voters through the SPLOST referendum so there is very little flexibility there. However, the SPLOST does include some resurfacing and intersection improvement funds that are not dedicated to specific roads but can be utilized where they are needed the most.

Ms. Rozier's question was specifically about the possibility of SPLOST-funded sidewalks in the Dunbar Road area to assist foot traffic and safety.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that Dunbar Road was considered for certain improvements in the SPLOST but did not make the final cut. Hopefully Dunbar Road could be included on a future SPLOST for some necessary improvements. He thanked Ms. Rozier for coming and commented that she spent considerable time the other day reviewing the proposed budget. He commended her on being an informed citizen.

Chairman Stalnaker closed the public hearing and announced that the FY23 budget adoption would take place on June 21st at 5:00 p.m. at the regular scheduled meeting at the Commissioner's Board Room in the Annex building at 200 Carl Vinson Parkway, Warner Robins.

Chairman Stalnaker announced that on June 30th at 10:00 a.m. there will be a groundbreaking for the Health Department expansion. The Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) will be on the next agenda for the Board's consideration. Also, there will be a dedication for the new Perry-Houston County Airport terminal building and corporate hangar on June 21st at 11:30 a.m. The airport is doing very well and is almost self-supported. The County and the City of Perry do contribute a small amount to the airport each year. Many improvements have been made over the years to the facility and it has become a great asset for Houston County.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming and remarked that the airport has made great progress over the years.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for coming and the citizens for the SPLOST. She expressed appreciation for the hard work on the proposed budget by the Chairman and staff.

Houston County Commissioners Meeting Continued from Page 71

Mr. Byrd thanked the citizens of Houston County for their support, and thanked staff and leadership for their work on this budget. He also extended congratulations to District Attorney Will Kendall as he was sworn in by the Governor on Monday.

Mr. Holland commented that it was long budget process like every other year but that we always arrive at a balanced budget in the end. It is a good, solid budget that he is pleased with and hoped that the Board was as well.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all. Meeting adjourned.

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner