

The Agenda Setting Meeting of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, May 31, 2005, at 7:00 p.m., in the Commissioners Meeting Chambers, Oconee County Courthouse.

Members Present:

Chairman Melvin Davis
Commissioner Jim Luke
Commissioner Donald H. Norris
Commissioner Margaret S. Hale
Commissioner Chuck Horton

Staff Present:

Administrative Officer Alan Theriault
County Clerk Gina M. Lindsey
Attorney Mike Pruett

Jeff Benko, Finance Director
Malinda Smith, Human Resources Director
Mike Leonas, Public Works Director
Dan Wilson, Engineer
Gary Dodd, Utility Director
John Hatcher, Wastewater Supervisor
B.R. White, Assistant Planning Director
John Gentry, Parks and Recreation Director
Wayne Provost, Strategic Planning Director
Rick Lewis, Operations Coordinator

Media Present:

Vinnie Williams, The Oconee Enterprise
Merritt Melancon, Athens Banner-Herald

Chairman Davis began the meeting with a Moment of Silence. Commissioner Hale led the Pledge of Allegiance.

FY 2006 Budget Hearing: The Board held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2006. Finance Director Jeff Benko reported the Board of Commissioners' goals for the budget process were to provide the highest quality services in the most fiscally responsible manner, be strategically focused, be forward looking 1, 3 and 5 years out and to ensure financial stability of the County. The consolidated proposed M & O Budget is \$16.9 million dollars. The proposed budget for all funds is \$38.9 million dollars.

Chairman Davis presented the following major items proposed for the FY 2005 Budget:

1. The budget for all funds is balanced.
2. The property millage rate is budgeted to remain unchanged at 8.48 mills in unincorporated Oconee County and 9.45 mills in the incorporated areas of the county.
3. Emphasis was placed in the areas of Law Enforcement and Public Safety. Two additional Traffic Unit Deputies and two additional positions in the Jail will be phased in, a Pumper Truck will be purchased for the Fire Department. Provided through a grant from the Office of Disaster Preparedness, Law Enforcement improvements to communications equipment and a Regional Disaster Response Vehicle for Emergency Services will be purchased.
4. Personnel were added in support to citizens needs in Code Enforcement, Public Works, Operations and Tax Assessor Departments.
5. Governmental efficiency was improved through the consolidation of all vehicle and heavy equipment maintenance with the establishment of the County's Fleet Maintenance Department and the creation of the Strategic and Long-Range Planning Department.
6. Information Technology initiative to provide wide area network (WAN) and communications to all County facilities improving operational efficiency and reducing communications costs.
7. An aggressive resurfacing and maintenance minimization program for our roads with Public Works' Transportation Improvement and Maintenance Plan, including bridges throughout the County.
8. G.O. Bond funding for the construction of the New Park Recreational Facilities, including construction of the new Senior Center supplemented by the CDBG grant.
9. Indigent Defense is funded throughout the court system as required by the State through a negotiated contract with the Georgia Public Defenders System.
10. Farmland Protection funding support that eventually will be matched with State and Federal funds to preserve Greenspace in the County.
11. SPLOST funding for construction of a Law Enforcement Facility and Emergency Operations Center.
12. Adjustments in fees are included in the Budget.

Sheriff Scott Berry expressed his appreciation to the Board for supporting law enforcement and public safety. Kate McDaniel complimented the Board and staff for their hard work. Russ Page said he was pleased the budget included funding for farmland protection. The Board will take final action on the FY 2006 Budget at the June 7, 2005 regular meeting.

Senior Citizens Property Tax Relief: Administrative Officer Alan Theriault reported on the process and options available to provide some form of property tax relief directed to Senior Citizens. The following goals and objectives were identified:

- Support for senior citizen property tax relief from the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education
- Relief should be targeted to those senior citizens who may be identified as least able to pay
- Property tax relief to seniors should be based on gross income
- Relief should not result in a tax shift from one group of taxpayers to another
- Relief should not create an adverse impact on service delivery offered by the school system or county government
- Relief should be phased in, with an attempt to absorb any lost revenue within the parameters of historical annual digest growth

On motion by Commissioner Norris and second by Commissioner Luke, the Board unanimously approved the creation of a Senior Citizens Property Tax Relief Committee to research and recommend a course of action and appointed the following individuals to serve on this committee: Harriette Browning (Tax Commissioner), Dr. James Miller (member of the Board of Tax Assessors), Randy Morrison (school system representative), Patti Ivey (citizen and member of previous committee), Fritzi Jackson (owner of AJ's Food Store), and Mike Power (large landowner and one of top 12 taxpayers). Finance Director Jeff Benko will serve as the commission liaison from the county government.

Military Leave – John Gentry: Human Resources Director Malinda Smith reported Parks and Recreation Director John Gentry has been called for active military duty. On motion by Commissioner Horton and second by Commissioner Hale, the Board voted unanimously to continue Mr. Gentry's sick and personal leave accruals and other benefits and privileges. Upon return from active duty there will be reinstatement for Mr. Gentry to his position at the Parks and Recreation Department. The Commissioners expressed their support to Mr. Gentry for voluntarily and devotedly serving our nation.

Calls Creek Wastewater Treatment Update: Wastewater Supervisor John Hatcher reported the upgrade of the Calls Creek Water Reclamation Facility to 1 MGD was completed in April, 2004. The upgrade included a new state of the art treatment process called membrane filtration which greatly enhanced the process operation. Mr. Hatcher noted the membrane operating system is easy to run and has saved on man-hours. Oconee County is the only facility in Georgia to have this specific setup.

US Filter Vice President Ed Jordan provided a power point presentation on the Membrane Bio Reactor Wastewater Treatment System. The ability of the system to almost completely remove suspended solids, including organics and microorganisms, provides highly reliable advanced treatment. Therefore, the processed water can be reused for non-potable water reuse applications.

Sheriff's Confiscated Assets Report: Sheriff Scott Berry presented the Confiscated Assets Report for fiscal year ended June 30, 2004. A total of \$38,486,03 was received in seized funds and interest.

Street Light Tax District – Twelve Oaks Subdivision: On motion by Commissioner Hale and second by Commissioner Horton, the Board unanimously approved the creation of Street Light Tax District No. C-2R-L1 (Amended) for Twelve Oaks Subdivision. ***See Documentation in Ordinances and Resolutions Book No. 15.***

No Through Trucks: Engineer Dan Wilson presented a resolution for consideration by the Board of Commissioners to add Creek Hollow Run, Choyce Johnson Road, Hillcrest Drive, Pete Dickens Road and Tappan Spur Road to the list of "No Through Trucks" roads as specified in the Ordinance to Regulate and Restrict the Parking, Through Travel and Overnight Storage of Trucks on the Public Road System.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Roadside Spraying: Engineer Dan Wilson presented the bids for the Oconee County Roadside Spraying Program 2005-2006. This program consists of spraying approximately 164 miles (20 ft. on each side) of county roadside to control vegetative growth in lieu of mowing. Mr. Wilson recommended the contract be awarded to the low bidder, ENVIROmanage, Inc., in the amount of \$20,383.56.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Blue Bags: Public Works Director Mike Leonas presented the bids for the annual purchase of Blue Bags (printed can liners). Mr. Leonas recommended the bid be awarded to the low bidder, Phoenix Recycling, in the amount of \$11,530.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Lawn Maintenance: Operations Coordinator Rick Lewis presented the bids for the 2005-2006 Annual Lawn Maintenance Contract. Mr. Lewis recommended the contract be awarded to the low bidder, Vision Landscaping, in the amount of \$12,480.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Mars Hill Road/Hwy. 53 Widening Project – Change Order: Engineer Dan Wilson presented a change order to the contract with Moreland-Altobelli for the Mars Hill Road/Hwy. 53 Widening Project in the amount of \$334,553. Mr. Wilson stated the increase in contract price includes the following:

- The intersection redesign for SR 53 at Watkinsville
- The addition of Durham Street to provide access to the Courthouse
- The additional work performed to resolve the SR 53 intersection at the Watkinsville termini, the traffic signal warrant study and signal design for Durham Street and work required to meet the county's Local Government Agreement with the Georgia Department of Transportation

The City of Watkinsville has agreed to provide \$90,000 for the redesign of the Watkinsville termini and the Durham Street Access to the courthouse and \$10,000 for closing expenditures for right-of-way acquisition. The City will be responsible for payment of right-of-way acquisition and will be reimbursed for their expense by the Georgia Department of Transportation. It was recommended the Chairman be authorized to finalize payment terms with the City of Watkinsville.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Tax Adjustment: The Board reviewed a request to authorize a refund of property taxes paid for the year 2004 on tax parcel no. C-07-012L in the amount of \$1,149.25. The taxpayer was awarded a year's support of this real estate which was titled in her late husband's name through the Athens-Clarke County probate court. The Oconee County Tax Commissioner's Office was not notified of the award and the taxes were paid by the mortgage company.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

Autry Road Closure: Administrative Officer Alan Theriault proposed closing the portion of Autry Road located at the site where the new park will be built. Construction on the park will begin July 1, 2005 and Autry Road will be moved. The portion of Autry Road from Hodges Mill Road to the cul-de-sac will remain open.

By consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda for June 7, 2005.

June 7, 2005 Agenda: The agenda for the June 7, 2005 meeting was reviewed.

Adjourn: There being no further business, on motion by Commissioner Horton and second by Commissioner Norris, the meeting was adjourned.

County Clerk

Chairman

Date