

PORT ST. JOE, FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 10, 2007

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners met this date in special session with the following members present: Chairman Bill Williams, Vice Chairman Jerry W. Barnes and Commissioners Carmen L. McLemore, Billy E. Traylor and Nathan Peters, Jr.

Others present were: County Attorney Timothy McFarland, Clerk Becky Norris, Clerk Executive Administrator Towan Kopinsky, Clerk Finance Officer Carla Hand, Chief Administrator Don Butler, Deputy Administrator Lynn Lanier, Building Official Lee Collinsworth, E.D.C. Director Alan McNair, Emergency Management Director Marshall Nelson, Emergency Management/911 Coordinator Ben Guthrie, Emergency Management Secretary Stephanie Richardson, Grant Writer Loretta Costin, Gulf County E.M.S. Director Shane McGuffin, Human Resources Director Denise Manuel, Mosquito Control Director Mark Cothran, Planner David Richardson, Road Department Superintendent Bobby Knee, employees of the Road Department, Solid Waste Director Joe Danford, Veterans Service Officer James Kennedy, Interim Sheriff Joe Nugent and employees of the Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Nugent called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m., E.T.

Vice Chairman Barnes opened the meeting with prayer, and Chairman Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Upon request by Chairman Williams, Clerk Norris made the following report to the Board:

1. The proposed County-wide millage rate based on the tentative budget changes is 4.9635 (5.3650 aggregate), and each dependent fire district is at .5000, which is a .9691% decrease over the 2006-07 Aggregate Rolled-Back Rate of 5.4175.
2. The maximum County-wide millage rate is 4.5168% (9% less than the rolled-back rate), unless the Board votes to adopt another rate. She stated that the rolled-back rate is 4.9635, and adoption of this rate requires a supermajority vote of the Board at the Final Public Hearing.
3. The Board has a Cash Carry Forward amount of \$1,556,937.00 in the General Fund (\$1,466,937.00-Unrestricted/\$90,000.00-Restricted).
4. The Dependent Fire Districts' tentative budgets include millage rates of .5000, which will require a unanimous vote of the Board at the Final Public Hearing.

5. The M.S.T.U. voted debt service rates are 5.4442 for the Gulf Front (an increase of 1.0442) and 1.9797 for the Gulf Interior (an increase of .3797).

RESOLUTION - BEACHES FIRE DEPARTMENT

Upon presentation by Clerk Norris, Commissioner Traylor motioned to adopt the following resolution allowing Beaches Fire Department to carry funds forward from the current year budget. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2007-18

WHEREAS, the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners of Gulf County, Florida, anticipates carrying forward additional cash for the 2007-2008 fiscal year that was not included in the tentative budget; and

WHEREAS, said cash carry forward is needed to help pay certain expenditures to be incurred in the 2007-2008 fiscal year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. That the 2007-2008 tentative budget be increased as follows:

ST JOE FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT FUND

REVENUES:

Balance Brought Forward/Cash:

10698-99000	Balance Brought Forward:Cash	\$ 45,000.00
-------------	------------------------------	--------------

EXPENDITURES:

Beaches Fire Department:

32122-64001	Equipment > \$5,000	\$ 45,000.00
-------------	---------------------	--------------

THIS RESOLUTION ADOPTED by the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners, this the 10th day of September, 2007.

(End)

RESOLUTION - DALKEITH FIRE DEPARTMENT

Upon presentation by Clerk Norris, Commissioner Peters motioned to adopt the following resolution allowing Dalkeith Fire Department to carry funds forward from the current year

budget. Commissioner Traylor seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2007-19

WHEREAS, the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners of Gulf County, Florida, anticipates carrying forward additional cash for the 2007-2008 fiscal year that was not included in the tentative budget; and

WHEREAS, said cash carry forward is needed to help pay certain expenditures to be incurred in the 2007-2008 fiscal year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. That the 2007-2008 tentative budget be increased as follows:

TUPELO FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT FUND

REVENUES:

Balance Brought Forward/Cash:

10798-99000	Balance Brought Forward:Cash	\$ 6,000.00
-------------	------------------------------	-------------

EXPENDITURES:

Dalkeith Fire Department:

31922-64000	Equipment	\$ 6,000.00
-------------	-----------	-------------

THIS RESOLUTION ADOPTED by the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners, this the 10th day of September, 2007.

(End)

RESOLUTION - GENERAL FUND

Upon presentation by Clerk Norris, Commissioner Traylor motioned to adopt the following resolution to carry funds forward from the current year budget for Mosquito Control and the Landfill. Commissioner McLemore seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2007-20

WHEREAS, the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners of Gulf County, Florida, anticipates carrying forward additional cash for the 2007-2008 fiscal year that were not included in the tentative budget; and

WHEREAS, said cash carry forward is needed to help pay certain expenditures to be incurred in the 2007-2008 fiscal year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. That the 2007-2008 tentative budget be increased as follows:

GENERAL FUND

REVENUES:

Balance Brought Forward/Cash:

00198-99000	Balance Brought Forward:Cash	\$ 62,150.00
-------------	------------------------------	--------------

EXPENDITURES:

Mosquito Control:

42262-43000	Utilities	\$ 10,000.00
-------------	-----------	--------------

Landfill:

42634-34000	Other Contractual Srvs	\$ 52,150.00
-------------	------------------------	--------------

THIS RESOLUTION ADOPTED by the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners, this the 10th day of September, 2007.

(End)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Upon call for public comment, the following individuals appeared before the Board.

Stan Roberson - inquired as to requested cash to be carried forward for South Gulf County Fire Department. Clerk Norris reported that it is already included in the proposed budget.

Ruth Hammond - stated that she is disappointed that the Board did not approve a total budget reduction of 9% as required by the State. She also stated that she is in favor of County-Wide Voting and also would like for the Board to advertise their minutes in The Star newspaper.

Kevin Welch - discussed the high number of houses that are on the market to be sold, and that County spending should be reduced to help the property owners. He stated that he is also in favor of County-Wide voting.

Edward McNally - stated that he is disappointed that the Board has not reduced their total budget by the 9% mandated by the State. He also requested that the Board submit a letter of complaint to the State regarding the mandate, and join the litigation with Bay County against the State.

Penny McLemore - discussed the increase in her property taxes over the years, and stated that there has been no increase in the level of service that she receives.

Jim Lloyd - discussed that people are having to sell their homes due to the increases in taxes and insurance, and this is creating a poor "mood" among the community.

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Chief Administrator Butler discussed that the property values County-wide were reduced by approximately \$300,000,000.00 and the number of homesteads have increased. He also stated that the Jail and Escrow for the Landfill are large items that had to be increased.

Commissioner Traylor discussed how hard the Board had to work on this budget for next year. He stated that they have reduced the millage rate for several years in a row, and that further reductions would be an additional loss of jobs.

Commissioner Barnes discussed the mandated budget for the landfill, stating that Representative Patronis is trying to assist the County with this issue but it will be Spring of 2008 before that happens. He further stated that he will do everything possible to avoid cutting any more jobs.

Commissioner Peters discussed his personal tax bills, stating that his house at Cape San Blas is for sale. He then motioned to reduce the General Fund Reserves by \$945,837.00 in an attempt to reach the 9% reduction mandated by the State. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting did then recess at 5:35 p.m., E.T.

The meeting reconvened at 5:48 p.m., E.T.

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Upon inquiry, Clerk Norris stated that the Board would need to reduce the tentative budget by an additional \$216,873.00 to reach the State mandated rate. Commissioner Peters then motioned to close the Wetappo Transfer Station in Wewahitchka, which would reduce the budget by \$274,000.00, and Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion. After discussion by members of the Board regarding this creating an additional loss of jobs, Commissioner Barnes withdrew his second and Commissioner Peters withdrew his motion. After further discussion by employees of the Road Department and members of the Board, Commissioner Peters motioned to close Wetappo Transfer Station, reduce this budget by \$216,873.00, and keep the employees (the employees will be given other duties and the balance needed to keep the employees will be taken from Reserves). Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kevin Welch - appeared before the Board to request that they seek other revenue sources to fund County operations (i.e. - licenses for pets to offset the costs of animal control and shelter).

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Clerk Norris reported that the Board would need an additional \$57,127.00 in the budget in order to fund the salaries of the 2 transfer station employees. Chief Administrator Butler stated that it takes approximately \$50,000.00 per full-time employee.

Commissioner Barnes discussed that it was quoted in the paper that he did not vote to keep the work order system, but he did vote to keep it in place.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Chairman Williams discussed factors regarding the Sheriff's Office, and would like to look into possible savings in the jail and animal control departments by working in conjunctions with the Sheriff. Sheriff Nugent discussed various situations regarding the Sheriff's Office, and the detrimental effect these budgets cuts are creating (he has to cut 6 employees). He discussed the reductions in law enforcement services that would arise from the \$205,210.00 decrease in his budget. He stated that he understands the hardship that the State has put on the Board, and requested that if there is anyway possible, they could return \$125,000.00 to his budget and he would be able to keep his same level of service.

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Upon discussion by County Attorney McFarland, Commissioner Peters motioned to reduce the transfer station budget in the amount of \$216,873.00 (this will leave \$57,127.00 and the balance needed to keep the 2 jobs will be transferred at a later date). Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Debbie Hooper - appeared before the Board to inquire what the two transfer station employees will be doing if the transfer station is closed. Chairman Williams stated that these are union employees and they will be re-designated according to what is worked out with the bargaining unit.

COUNTY JAIL

Chief Administrator Butler discussed that the Board has added an additional \$522,000.00 to the Detention & Corrections budget for next fiscal year, which will allow for 9 Correctional Officers (the State says that there should be 22). Chairman Williams discussed meeting with F.D.L.E. to develop a corrective action plan regarding the jail.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Ricky Tolbert - appeared to discuss that many individuals that have complained to the Board about taxes have multiple homes/parcels of property. He also discussed that until recently the Sheriff's Office has always operated the jail (with a much smaller Detentions budget). Lieutenant Tolbert discussed that the Sheriff's Office

operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and places their lives in danger for the residents of Gulf County, and they will not be able to provide the service they now have if employees have to be laid off.

Penny McLemore - discussed that she should not be penalized for owning multiple properties that were inherited from her family. She stated that she feels for the employees that are losing their jobs, but she is trying to keep what she has instead of having to sell it. She also stated that she feels the Board could cut areas other than jobs.

Kevin Welch - stated that he appreciates the tax cuts the Board has made and discussed that he owns multiple homes which he rents out, and he takes a loss due to increased taxes and insurance costs.

Al Minzner - commended Board for making the 9% reduction and discussed that the Board departments have had a 40% increase over the last 7 years. He also discussed additional revenue sources (pet licenses, etc.) to cover various expenses.

Susan Buzzett Clementson - discussed that she and her sister have inherited property at Indian Pass. She stated that her father paid \$5,000.00 for the property in 1950, and now the two parcels are valued at \$565,000.00 and \$700,000.00. She stated that they pay \$13,000.00 per year in taxes, and will be unable to keep the home she spent every summer at when she was growing up. She stated that she did not pay \$1,000,000.00 for the property, but is valued like this because other people paid high prices.

Stan Roberson - discussed that what bothers the taxpayers most is the lack of accountability (the County is not operated like a business).

Trish Petrie - discussed her business at Indian Pass, stating that she has property to expand her business, but does not believe she will be able to do so due to the tax base in Gulf County. She stated that the "fear" of buying here, working here and living here are harming the economy of this County.

Patricia Hardman - commended the Board on reducing the budget according to the State mandate, and discussed that nobody wants to lay people off, but many of the local businesses have had to do the same thing due to the high tax increases on businesses. She stated that the Board needs to change the way they are doing business, not just reduce the number of jobs.

2007-08 PROPOSED BUDGET

Upon discussion by Clerk Norris that the Board has reduced the budget by \$1,162,710.00 tonight, which puts the Board at 9% below the rolled-back rate.

COUNTY-WIDE

Upon motion by Commissioner Peters, second by Commissioner Barnes, and unanimous vote, the Board adopted a tentative County-Wide millage rate of 4.5168.

Upon motion by Commissioner Peters, second by Commissioner Barnes, and unanimous vote, the Board adopted the tentative County-Wide budget.

DEPENDENT FIRE DISTRICTS

Upon motion by Commissioner Peters, second by Commissioner Traylor, and unanimous vote, the Board adopted a tentative millage rate of .5000 for each Dependent Special Fire District (St. Joseph, Tupelo, Overstreet and Howard Creek).

Upon motion by Commissioner Peters, second by Commissioner Barnes, and unanimous vote, the Board adopted the tentative budget for each Dependent Special Fire District (St. Joseph, Tupelo, Overstreet and Howard Creek).

M.S.T.U.

Commissioner Traylor motioned to adopt a tentative millage rate of 5.4442 for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit - Cape San Blas Gulfside. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed 4 to 1, with Commissioner Peters voting no.

Commissioner Traylor motioned to adopt a tentative millage rate of 1.9797 for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit - Cape San Blas Gulfside Interior. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed 4 to 1, with Commissioner Peters voting no.

Commissioner Traylor motioned to adopt the tentative budget for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit - Cape San Blas Gulfside. Commissioner Barnes seconded the motion, and it passed 4 to 1, with Commissioner Peters voting no.

Commissioner Barnes motioned to adopt the tentative budget for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit - Cape San Blas Gulfside. Commissioner Traylor seconded the motion, and it passed 4 to 1, with Commissioner Peters voting no.

FINAL PUBLIC HEARING

Upon motion by Commissioner Peters, second by Commissioner Traylor, and unanimous vote, the Board scheduled the final budget public hearing for Monday, September 24, 2007 at 5:01 p.m., E.T.

There being no further business and upon motion by Commissioner Peters, the meeting did then adjourn at 7:02 p.m., E.T.

**BILL WILLIAMS
CHAIRMAN**

ATTEST:

**REBECCA L. NORRIS
CLERK**