

**Board of Commissioners Agenda Meeting
Courthouse Commission Chambers
May 24, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.
Minutes**

Members Present:

Chairman John Daniell
Commissioner Mark Thomas
Commissioner Chuck Horton
Commissioner Amrey Harden
Commissioner Mark Saxon

Staff Present:

Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Justin Kirouac, County Administrator
Holly Stephenson, County Clerk
Melissa Braswell, Finance Director
Donna Norton, Budget Officer
Alex Newell, Internal Services Director
Diane Baggett, Communications Manager
Jody Woodall, Public Works Director
Lisa Davol, Parks & Recreation Director

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the FY23 Budget Public Hearing to order and stated that participants using Zoom may comment by using the raised-hand feature.

FY23 Proposed Budget Public Hearing:

Finance Director Melissa Braswell presented the proposed FY23 Budget, stating the Budget supports the mission of Oconee County and is designed to achieve the strategic goals set forth for the county.

The proposed FY23 General Fund Budget is \$37,894,885.00, which is an increase of 3.15% over the FY22 General Fund budget. This increase is attributed to the LOST revenue increases related to the COSTCO development in progress and an increase in property tax values.

The proposed General Fund Revenues are \$37,894,885.00, which equal the proposed FY23 General Fund Expenditures for a balanced General Fund Budget. A breakdown of proposed revenue sources with proposed amounts along with proposed expenditures with proposed amounts was presented. This entire presentation can be found on the county website.

The current estimated assigned Fund Balance is \$12,073,788, with estimated unassigned Fund Balance of \$9,345,879. The current committed fund balance is \$912,912 which was committed for the Mars Hill Phase 1 improvement project. Ms. Braswell recommends and requests uncommitting this fund balance as the project is complete.

The total proposed budget for FY23 is \$65,880,198 to include SPLOST, capital, special revenue, and enterprise funds. This is a .13% decrease from prior year. The descriptions and recommended expenditures for these funds were presented.

The FY23 Budget supports the strategic goals of the county with a commitment to public safety, transportation maintenance & improvements, water and sewer infrastructure plan, and the fleet phase replacement program.

Ms. Braswell presented a list of multi-year projects which are recommended to be converted to project length budgets as they will not be completed in one fiscal year. She requests consideration for these projects to be approved as multi-year projects in a project length budget which would authorize budget amendments as needed for the life of the projects, not exceeding the balance remaining on a project.

The 2nd Budget Hearing is scheduled for June 7, 2022 at 6pm. A Fee Schedule will be provided to the Board and will also be available on the website. A one-page summary of the FY23 Budget will be available in the Commissioner's Office, Library and posted on the County's website. In addition, her entire presentation will be posted on the website. The final approval of the budget along with uncommitting the remaining fund balance and consideration of the project length budget approvals will be considered on June 7, 2022.

Chairman Daniell expressed excitement over this budget which will include a \$3,500 salary increase at entry-level for all employee grade, which will compound over salary grade steps. Part-time employees will also receive an hourly increase. Public safety employees of grade 10 and above will receive an additional 2% over the \$3,500. The county will continue to fund a Senior Deputy POST certification. There will be a 10% increase in cost of health insurance in FY23, but the county will cover this increase for any employee who participates in the Wellness Program. Additionally, the county will deposit \$1200 in employee health savings accounts.

For the taxpayers, there will be a millage rate reduction so only real growth in the tax digest will be recognized. Chairman Daniell stated there will be no need for tax increase hearings in Oconee County for this year. He thanked the Board for their commitment to the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan to allow this to happen.

Commissioner Harden questioned the percentage of participants in the wellness program and encouraged more to participate.

The Public Comment Period was opened.

John Webb, 1320 Bent Creek Road, questioned the unassigned balance fund and the expected impact from COSTCO for SPLOST funds. He confirmed all the budget information would be found on the county website. He also questioned the number of county employees.

*There were no further comments and no "raised hands" via Zoom.
The Public Hearing was closed.*

Call to Order: 6:26 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order and stated that participants using Zoom may comment by using the raised-hand feature.

Pledge of Allegiance:

County Attorney Daniel Haygood led the Pledge after a moment of silence.

Approval of Agenda:

ACTION:

Motion:	Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the May 24, 2022 Agenda.
Second:	Mark Saxon
Voted in Favor of Motion:	Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion:	None
Final Action:	Motion Passed.

Statements and Remarks from Citizens:

None.

Statements and Remarks from Commissioners:

Chairman Daniell announced the Project Team for State Route 316 at Jimmy Daniel Road is hosting a virtual public open house from May 17 to June 10. There is also a virtual presentation and Q&A session on May 26 from 4-6pm. There is a link on the main page of the county website to join this meeting.

He also reminded citizens of the Water Resources Conservation Watering Schedule that is in effective per the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

For odd-number addresses, outdoor watering is allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Sundays.

For even-number addresses, outdoor watering is allowed on Mondays, Wednesdays or Saturdays.

Drip irrigation or hand watering is allowed on any day.

Presentation of the Georgia Rental Assistance Program through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs:

Presented by: Christopher Myers, Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Discussion: A Power Point presentation was presented explaining that Georgia received \$552 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA1) under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and an additional \$437 Million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA2) under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The funds are used to provide relief to landlords and tenants whose finances have been negatively impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic by bringing past due rent and utility payments current up to 18 months. The program is being administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and can be applied for through their website at GeorgiaRentalAssistance.ga.gov.

Update on Cole Springs Road Closure:

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator

Discussion: County Administrator Justin Kirouac and Public Works Director Jody Woodall met virtually with the GDOT office for options on Cole Springs Road. The four options include: permanent closure; re-opening the intersection as is; a long-term solution such as a roundabout; or a temporary solution which would require correcting the skew of the intersection. Any temporary or long-term solution would require a study and engineering to correct the skew. Chairman Daniell explained that GDOT is looking at this intersection along with Hebron Church Road at Highway 53 as the next two possible projects for improvement partnerships. Commissioner Harden questioned the timeframe for improvements, the expense of a study and whether a correction of the skew is required. Chairman Daniell responded the timeframe will depend on funding which is typically four years for federal project or two years on a state project. An Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) study could be completed quickly, but the minimum requirement for any improvement is correction of the skew. Jody Woodall explained the ICE study, along with design and lifespan of certain projects in regards to federal funding. Some of the money spent on a temporary improvement could offset the cost of a permanent solution. Commissioner Saxon requested estimates for cost and timeframe on the two options to improve the intersection before the next BOC meeting.

Appointment of a Special Master for the Ethics Board:

Presented by: Daniel Haygood, County Attorney

Discussion: County Attorney Daniel Haygood advised that the current Special Master for the Ethics Board has resigned and recommends Attorney Greg Sowell as his replacement as Special Master for the Ethics Board and an Administrative Hearing Officer for the Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

First Reading and Public Hearing of the proposed updates to the No Through Truck Ordinance:

Presented by: Jody Woodall, Public Works Director

Discussion: Periodically the Board is tasked with reviewing and updating the Truck Traffic Ordinance as to where truck traffic is not allowed. The current proposal has been reviewed with the Sheriff's Office. Adjustments were made based on the same road coming in from another county where truck traffic is not allowed. The Sheriff will enforce the roads the Board adds to this list. Commissioner Harden questioned the signage, particularly on Lane Creek Road. He also asked why truck traffic is not allowed on the Mars Hill Road four-lane from Highway 53 to Highway 316. He would like the Board to have further discussion on whether this four-lane should be on the list or not. Mr. Woodall replied that the goal is to move trucks to state highways to increase the life span of county roads. Commissioner Horton commented repairs to this road will be the county's responsibility in the future. Commissioner Thomas expressed safety concerns over trucks passing schools and would like to see the Mars Hill four-lane come off the list along with Astondale Road as it could help the traffic going through Watkinsville. He also suggested a no engine brake amendment to the ordinance in residential areas due to the noise issue. Chairman Daniell commented the Mars Hill four-lane was designed as a residential route in the comprehensive plan. He proposed the Ordinance be updated and open for public comment on Astondale and Mars Hill Road over the next two weeks before discussed again at the June 7 meeting.

*The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.
Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.
The Public Hearing was closed.*

Discussion of the IGA with Athens-Clarke County Regarding Juvenile Court Judge Compensation:

Presented by: Chairman John Daniell

Discussion: An agreement has been reached with Athens-Clarke County (ACC) regarding juvenile court judge compensation. These employees will be paid through ACC, along with the grant towards compensation. Then the net cost will be split 80% ACC and 20% Oconee County. ACC will be considering this agreement at their next meeting also.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

*The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.
Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.*

Discussion of the Hog Mountain Road Multi-Use Path Design Services Award:

Presented by: Jody Woodall, Public Works Director

Discussion: Public Works recommends awarding the design services bid for the Hog Mountain Road Multi-use path to the lowest bidder, Atlas Technical Systems, for \$195,610 with the necessary budget amendments up to the contract amount for the life of the project and authorizing Chairman Daniell to execute all necessary documents.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

*The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.
Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.*

Discussion of Awarding Invitation to Bid for Herman C Michael Pickleball Courts:

Presented by: Lisa Davol, Parks and Recreation Director

Discussion: Parks and Recreation recommends awarding the Herman C Michael pickleball court project to the only bidder, Bayne Development Group, to demolition the two current junior tennis courts and reconstruct four new courts which will be two dedicated junior tennis courts and two dedicated pickle ball courts in the amount of \$139,873. This request stems from increased popularity of the sport and will include all the necessary budget amendments up to the contract amount for the life of the project.
Chairman Daniell updated all on the long-term solution for more pickleball court development in Oconee County as funding allows.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened.

Kevin McHugh, 1220 Nona Drive, questioned the location of the proposed courts.

There were no further comments and no "raised hands" via Zoom.

The Public Comment Period was closed.

Discuss Public Defender FY23 Indigent Defense Services Agreement for the period of July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023:

Presented by: Chairman John Daniell

Discussion: The Contract for Indigent Defense under Public Defender John Donnelly is an annual contract that is up for renewal effective July 1, 2022 for \$202,160 which is in the current budget. The Chairman recommends approval of the contract for the July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 term. Any monies not spent is returned to the county each year.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.

Discussion of the Early Retirement Budget Amendment:

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator

Discussion: In order to fund the early retirement option already enacted by the Board, the recommendation is for budget amendments now out of the current fiscal year to reduce the liability for future payments from long term amortization. The amount is approximately \$504,000 for sixteen employees taking early retirement.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.

Discussion of Equity and Merit Adjustments:

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator

Discussion: The county has maintained a very conservative approach to budgeting in the last few years, but in effort to remain current with the job market, there is a recommendation for a one-time equity adjustment of \$2000 for all full-time employees and \$1000 for permanent part-time employees. Additionally, a one-time \$45,900 funding for merit over and above the other equity adjustment would be available to reward top performing employees who exceeded expectations in their performance review. The request includes any additional necessary budget amendments. The proposed payout date is June 10 if approved.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 7, 2022 Regular Meeting.

*The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.
Chairman Daniell asked if there were "raised hands" via Zoom and there were none.*

Executive Session:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.
Second: Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Action/Motion: **Motion Passed.**
Adjourn into Executive Session: 7:25 p.m.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

Executive Session Adjourned: 7:35 p.m.

Regular Session:

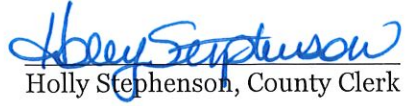
Motion: Mark Thomas made a motion to adjourn back into Regular Session.
Second: Chuck Horton
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Action/Motion: **Motion Passed.**
Adjourned into Regular Session: 7:36 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Second: Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Action/Motion: **Motion Passed.**
Meeting Adjourned: 7:36 p.m.


John Daniell, Chairman

6-7-22
Date


Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

6-7-22
Date