

BUDGET HEARING – SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

The Board of County Commissioners, Walton County, Florida, held a Budget Hearing on September 12, 2016 at 5:01 p.m. at the Walton County Courthouse Annex in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.

The following Board members were present: Commissioner Sara Comander, Chairman; Commissioner Cecilia Jones, Vice-Chairman; Commissioner W. N. (Bill) Chapman; Commissioner Bill Imfeld; and Commissioner Cindy Meadows. Mr. Larry Jones, County Administrator; Attorney Mark Davis, County Attorney; and Mr. Alex Alford, Clerk of Court and County Comptroller; were also present.

Chairman Comander called the meeting to order.

Chairman Comander read for the record the following statement:

The purpose of this meeting is to set a tentative millage rate and a tentative budget.

The proposed Walton County Board of County Commissioners county-wide millage rate is 3.6363 mills, and 0.4912 mills for the North Walton Mosquito Control District.

In aggregate, this is an 8.43% increase over the Rolled Back Rate.

The Rolled Back Rate is the rate that would essentially generate the same ad valorem tax revenues as last year.

The county-wide 3.6363 mills (which are applied to the General, County Transportation, Fine and Forfeiture, and Capital Projects/Infrastructure funds) is the same as the fiscal year 2015-2016 rate, which was 3.6363 mills.

The 0.4912 millage rate for the North Walton Mosquito Control District is the same as fiscal year 2015-2016 rate, which was 0.4912.

Ms. Melissa Thomason, County Finance Director, briefly reviewed the changes which have occurred since the July 11, 2016 Budget Workshop. She reported \$12,938 was added to begin a contribution for a south Walton Senior Center which will match the same contribution being made to the DeFuniak Springs Senior Center. Also added were TDC Code Enforcement Officers to bring the total to 10 officers. Applicable training and equipment has been added to support the extra positions. Ms. Thomason stated the TDC is still in discussion regarding funding possibilities for Friends of South Walton Turtles; sufficient funding is included in the TDC contingency budget pending approval by the TDC Advisory Council and subsequently by the County Commission. She reported a cost of living increase (COLA) of 4% has been included for employees earning \$60,000.00 or less annually; and 3% for employees earning more than \$60,000.00 annually. Both percentages were based on a 40 hour work week. Probationary employees will receive a 1.5% increase. She briefly explained the reasoning for the increase for the probationary employees.

Ms. Thomason noted that the design of the landfill is underway and anticipates utilizing landfill reserves for the new transfer station which has not been included in this budget.

Motion by Commissioner Chapman, second by Commissioner Meadows, to open the Public Hearing. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Comander Aye, Jones Aye, Chapman Aye, Imfeld Aye, Meadows Aye.

Commissioner Meadows asked to add to the budget \$131,000.00 for the U.S. Highway 98 Median Enhancement Project. She reported the average daily trips per day are 51,000. She discussed the economic impact this project would have. Commissioner Imfeld concurred with Commissioner Meadows and stated that this is where the bulk of the TDT Bed Tax collections are occurring. He questioned if a legislative finding would be necessary to allow TDT funds to

be used. Attorney Davis said the legislative finding would need to define which areas were identified as gateways. Discussion continued on determining the areas to receive funding and the possible use of TIF funding as a funding source along with TDC and General Funds.

Commissioner Chapman questioned if the \$130,000.00 would cover the entire length of U.S. Highway 98. Commissioner Meadows responded that it would. She said some of the maintenance is funded by FDOT and other agencies. Discussion followed on the length of time and the areas which will be funded by FDOT.

Mr. Bob Hudson, Walton County Taxpayers' Association, spoke in opposition of the use of TIF funding for the median maintenance. He said there are tremendous infrastructure and road needs which must be met with the TIF funding.

Chairman Comander asked Ms. Thomason if there were ample funds in the Contingency Funds for this project until a legislative finding could be established. Ms. Thomason said there was.

Mr. Jay Tusa, TDC Executive Director, reported that TDC had already agreed to maintain the gateways in the amount of \$58,000.00. He said this amount was not included in the \$131,000 requested by Commissioner Meadows.

The Board concurred to take the \$131,000.00 out of the Contingency Fund if a legislative finding is not established to allow the use of TDC funds.

Commissioner Jones questioned what areas the \$58,000.00 TDC amount covered. Mr. Tusa said the amount covered: From U.S. 331 to Blue Mountain Road and to C.R. 283 N.; U.S. 98 at the Bay County line; and U.S. 98 at the Okaloosa County line. The area at the Okaloosa County line will be funded by TDC within four to five years. Commissioner Meadows submitted a map to show the U.S. 98 median areas.

Mr. Bob Brooke voiced concern with the differing ratios of funding per mile between the \$131,000.00/26.4 miles and the \$58,000.00/5 miles. Chairman Comander stated it depended upon the level of service received with each amount. Ms. Leigh Moore said the difference between the amounts is that FDOT makes a contribution to the local jurisdiction when the maintenance is taken over. She said the contribution will go toward the county's portion of the maintenance.

The Board directed Ms. Thomason to tentatively add \$131,000.00 to the overall budget.

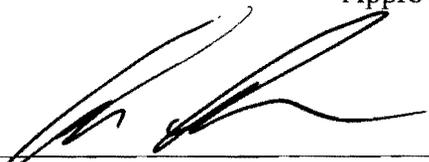
Mr. Brooke asked if there would be an increase to the millage rate due to the addition of the \$131,000.00 for the median project. Commissioner Imfeld said the millage could not be increased. Ms. Thomason recommended tentatively increasing the TDC Budget by \$131,000.00 until a decision could be reached on a funding source at the final Budget Hearing on September 26, 2016.

Motion by Commissioner Jones, second by Commissioner Chapman, to adopt **Resolution 2016-65** setting a tentative county-wide millage rate of 3.6363 mills, and a tentative 0.4912 mills for the North Walton Mosquito Control District. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Comander Aye, Jones Aye, Chapman Aye, Imfeld Aye, Meadows Aye.

Motion by Commissioner Chapman, second by Commissioner Jones, to adopt **Resolution 2016-66** setting the tentative budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 in the amount of \$138,336,764.00 for county government of which \$612,986 is for the North Walton Mosquito Control District. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Comander Aye, Jones Aye, Chapman Aye, Imfeld Aye, Meadows Aye.

Motion by Commissioner Chapman, second by Commissioner Jones, to close the Public Hearing. Ayes 5, Nays 0. Comander Aye, Jones Aye, Chapman Aye, Imfeld Aye, Meadows Aye.

Approved: 
Sara Comander, Chairman

Attest: 
Alex Alford, Clerk of Court and County Comptroller