



Cherokee County Board of Commissioners WORK SESSION MINUTES

June 6, 2017

3:00 p.m. | Cherokee Hall

Chairman Ahrens began Work Session at 3:07 p.m. Those present included Commissioner Steve West; Commissioner Raymond Gunnin; Commissioner Scott Gordon; County Manager, Jerry Cooper; County Attorney, Angie Davis; County Clerk, Christy Black. Also present were Agency Directors/Department Heads; the media; and the public. Commissioner Bob Kovacs was absent.

The Chairman read various quotes from a *Presidential Humor*.

1. Proclamation in recognition of Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Chairman Ahrens spoke about importance of elder abuse awareness and read the proclamation. Tim Morris accepted the proclamation and gave several examples of elder abuse that he has had reported to him.

Chairman Ahrens noted that June 6 was the 73rd anniversary of D-Day. He mentioned that his uncle was on a battleship supporting that invasion.

2. Public Engagement for the Comp. Plan Update Presentation by Margaret Stallings.

Ms. Stallings presented the public engagement portion of the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the website has been launched in hopes to get the public to take the survey and to visit the site in order to generate interest in the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that there are three sections on the website including one for Ball Ground, one for Waleska, and one for Cherokee County. She stated that the critical issues forums dates would be June 27 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Rec Center in Woodstock, and June 29 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at here at the Conference Center. She stated that it would be an in-person open house.

Ms. Stalling requested feedback from the Commissioners regarding the advisory committee. She stated that the purpose of the advisory committee is to help guide the project and provide input and represent the larger community and to be a focus group. She stated that the advisory committee would work on building a consensus from the citizen input on critical issues that will work through possible changes to the future development map and what the implementation strategies will be going forward. She stated that the advisory committee will have four to five meetings from July through March 2018. Ms. Stallings provided a slide of the breakdown of the committee: Planning Commission members, a staff member from Economic Development, one Elected Official. She stated that a decision needed to be made as to who the members of the advisory committee will be and that by state regulations there has to be one

elected official as part of the committee. She stated that it is a suggestion to utilize the Planning Commission because they already represent a wide variety of people in the community as well as the two cities. Chairman Ahrens inquired if there was a target number in mind, and she replied possibly eleven. She stated the reason for utilizing the Planning Commission would be the convenience of adding the advisory committee meeting after their regular scheduled work session meetings. Ms. Stallings stated that she would want the feedback from the Board of Commissioners regarding the meeting strategy and the choice of the elected official.

She reviewed the next steps involved in the Comprehensive Plan which included continuing to publicize the website and finalize the critical issues forums, finalize the advisory committee and wrap-up the market study with the consultant. Commissioner Gordon asked for the critical issues forum dates again. Ms. Stallings replied that Woodstock was June 27 from 5:30 to 7:30 at the Rec Center and at the Bluffs in Canton on June 29 from 6:00 to 8:00. He stated that utilizing the Planning Commission made sense because of the composition and their engagement if it isn't too much for them. Ms. Stallings stated that maybe she could pole the Planning Commission members this evening on this. Chairman Ahrens inquired about keeping the number of the advisory members to eleven or twelve members and splitting the Planning Commission group, maybe consider four Planning members and other citizens. He stated that he would like to see citizen representation. He then asked what kind of meeting schedule might the committee expect. Ms. Stallings replied that she had in mind every other month, maybe a total of 4 to 5 meetings, meeting when we have something to present to them. She said she really wanted them to be about a half hour to hour meetings.

Chairman Ahrens inquired as to the date the committee needed to be finalized, and she stated that two weeks would be ideal or by the next commission meeting on June 20. The Chairman stated that they could task themselves for suggestions to finalize the advisory committee by June 20.

3. Introduction of 2017 Cherokee County Millage Rate and proposed scenarios by Jerry Cooper.

Mr. Cooper provided an overview of the budget and the setting of the millage rate and what rate would need to be advertised. He stated that the process is complex in that all departments are requested to submit their budget which is referred to as a zero-based budget. He stated that zero-based budget means they do not provide incremental increases based on prior year budgets and they justify all spending in each of their perspective budgets based on the needs as they have determined in their operations. He stated that all departments and agencies have been met with over the last few months while discussing and negotiating the needs of each department in hopes of achieving the goal of a full rollback in the millage rate. He addressed the overview of their budgets, including all non-property tax revenues available to support the budgets, their current run rate and projections of what they need. He stated that he would like to calculate the millage rate using the latest tax digest provided by the Tax Assessor's Office and roll that into the budget to make sure the budget is balanced for the next year.

He reviewed the General Fund Expenditures stating that the 2017 revised budget is \$84.8M and the 2018 proposed budget is \$84.7M. Mr. Cooper noted that it is 1.8% below the current budget without the COLA. He stated that he asked staff to identify 3% COLA and look at the numbers, and although those numbers result in a slight decrease in the current budget by .1%, it is a decrease. He stated that the major change is that \$4M will be use of the reserves this year to pay down the principal balance of the RRDA 2007A Tax Exempt Bonds. He stated that overall it is a reduction.

He stated that a major change to the proposed budget includes facility management and that is due to moving the janitorial staffing operations under facilities management. He stated that it has to be shown as a change although the overall cost is a reduction of \$102K from the prior contract with Sparkling Clean. He stated another project being pursued is the IT security upgrades which will enhance the security infrastructure and that Code Enforcement has requested new personnel for their operation. Mr. Cooper addressed the requests from several other departments which include the Tax Commissioner for a Senior Clerk and replace old computers; Tax Assessor's Office for a new position and six new leased vehicles; Public Safety for 15 new full-time positions for law enforcement; and Judicial Services for court administrative service positions. Mr. Cooper stated that under Public Works, the major area to address is the tight labor market. He stated that due to the growth in the state and region many positions are difficult to fill. He stated that contractors are able to attract Road and Bridge personnel which make it difficult to hire the same personnel at the pay that is currently allocated. He stated that it is proposed to increase salaries for Roads and Bridges personnel to attract and help fill those positions. He stated that Engineering would like to hire two new positions and obtain three new leased vehicles, and the Recycling Center is scheduled to receive a new backhoe due to the age of the existing piece of equipment.

Mr. Cooper addressed the Fire Fund Expenditures stating that 25% will be added due to the Canton Fire consolidation which adds \$817,000, and he stated that they have requested 16 new positions for Fire/EMS. He stated that with the 3% COLA there is a 9.8% increase in their budget.

Mr. Cooper addressed the forecast for all non-property revenue stating a slight decrease in non-property taxes; licensing and permits with an increase; commission on tax collection fee (fee for Board of Education tax collection) has been reduced but due to the growth at digest results in an increase. He stated that the 8.8% decrease is due to the TAVT with no use of reserves. Mr. Cooper addressed the Fire Fund Revenue Forecast for FY2018 with an increase of 13.9% and not proposing any use of reserves.

He addressed the Tax Digest stating that there is a healthy growth digest from existing properties. He stated before appeals 3.77% and real growth is 4.81%; after appeals based on estimates is 3.74% in existing properties and real growth 4.64%. He stated that under the law, if there is not a rollback in the millage rate to offset inflation, there must be advertising of a tax increase. He stated that although there is a decrease in the property tax rates for the General Fund, if there is not a full rollback, advertising for three Public Hearings and a tax increase must be provided. Mr. Cooper reviewed the following scenarios: a zero-based budget with a 3% COLA and no use of reserves, the millage rate would be 5.582; 5.680 current) zero-based budget with a 3% COLA and a use of reserves of \$500,000 results in a 5.528 millage rate; roll back rate based on a 3% COLA and a use of reserves to balance it would result in a full rollback with a millage rate of 5.483, and he stated it would require \$910,000 use of reserves; and a zero-budget base and without the COLA would be below the rollback rate by 1.06%.

Mr. Cooper stated that it was his recommendation to advertise a higher rate and then typically it would end in a lower rate. He stated that he would like to advertise the rate at 5.528 with reserves at \$500,000. He stated that over the next month, before the millage rate is finalized, he is hopeful to find some cuts or additional revenue in the amount of \$410,000 to have a full rollback. Mr. Cooper addressed the Fire Fund in calculating the millage rate. He stated that he wasn't as comfortable finding revenue and expenditures but would work with the team to get the millage rate to 3.298. He stated that it includes 3% COLA and a use of reserves in the amount of \$500,000. He also stated that with the number of personnel they propose, he is not as confident there will be a full rollback. He stated that the reserves are estimated at \$6.8M at the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Cooper addressed the Park Bond and stated that due to the growth there can be a full rollback. He stated that a rate of 0.581 is proposed. He stated that the overall result of the

millage rate would be a full rollback resulting in a decrease of 4.01% and that what would be advertised is a decrease of 2.65%. He stated that all the rates are below the current rates which is good news. Mr. Cooper stated there will be the attempt to achieve a full rollback in the General Fund and it will be achieved in the Park Bond. However, he did not propose a full rollback in the Fire District Fund based on the demand for EMS and the increased demand for fire suppression.

He provided and reviewed a schedule transparent to the citizens that identifies exactly where their property tax money is spent. He stated that based on a zero-based budget with 3% COLA, and based on the average value of home, the average household pay is \$526.05. He stated that more than half goes to law enforcement and judicial.

Mr. Cooper reviewed the next steps as follows: advertise the millage rate June 11; Public Hearing June 20 at 6:00 p.m.; Public Hearing July 18 at 11:00 a.m.; Public Hearing July 18 at 6:00 p.m.; and adopt all County rates, including school district rates, July 18 at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Ahrens thanked Mr. Cooper and stated that the General Fund at \$24.8M seemed high. Mr. Cooper stated that he did not have an issue with use of reserves for equipment capital because you can always forego those in a downturn and try to keep taxes low. He stated that there has been more capital purchased through the General Fund now since the economy has improved. He stated he is not that confident that the economy will continue at the pace that it is now. Chairman Ahrens confirmed that the \$24.8M is net of the \$4M for the RRDA. Mr. Cooper stated that net cash position is very healthy and that is what should matter most, the County operates on cash basis.

Chairman Ahrens asked if anyone had concerns about advertising rate increases as Mr. Cooper spoke about. Commissioner Gordon stated that in year's past the Board always came in conservatively giving an opportunity to sharpen the pencil and work on it as Mr. Cooper mentioned, making it clear that he will work very hard on a rollback. He said that he'd love to see that happen, but to meet deadlines, again, as in year's past, he'd like to see the County be conservative as Mr. Cooper has stated and not get into an advertising pinch. Steve West stated that he agreed with that. Chairman Ahrens addressed his philosophy on rollback. He stated that rollback is a bad concept because if you rollback inflationary increases year on year and you actually incur real inflationary increases in costs, you are digging a hole. He stated that the math won't be equal as far as what increased assessments are vs. operating costs for fuel and such. He stated that he would have much less of a hang-up about a full rollback, but more of a concern of getting the resources needed to get the job done.

Chairman Ahrens stated that Mr. Cooper had some direction to work with on Thursday. Mr. Cooper confirmed that the rate would be advertised at 5.528 and the Fire District at 3.298. Chairman Ahrens agreed. Commissioner Gunnin commented that it speaks to EMS collections now that, even though there won't be a rollback in Fire, Fire is now assuming the EMS debt that had been out of the General Fund. Mr. Cooper clarified that they eliminated the increase. Mr. Cooper stated that they have enhanced the services and the number of squads and personnel. Chairman stated that it has a different feel than it has in the past, and Mr. Cooper replied that we are able to breathe a little bit.

On another topic, Mr. Cooper stated that a press release will be out soon. With the assistance of Sheriff Reynolds, rather than to hire more maintenance personnel for the new parks, there will be a transfer from the Parks and Rec Fund to the General Fund to allow the Sheriff to use inmate labor for general

maintenance in the parks. He stated it saves money and all will benefit. He thanked Sheriff Reynolds and his team for working with the County on this.

7.1 Public Hearing to consider revisions to the Cherokee County Erosion, Sedimentation and Pollution Control Ordinance.

Consider revisions to the Cherokee County Erosion, Sedimentation and Pollution Control Ordinance.

Geoff Morton stated that in June 2016 the Georgia Soil and Water Conversation Commission issued an updated version of the model Erosion, Sediment and Pollution Control Ordinance. He stated that it is an ordinance that all counties and cities in Georgia must adopt to continue their locally issuing authority. He stated the revised ordinance includes changes that result in legislative actions adopted by the Georgia Legislature that involve the Georgia Erosion and Settlement Control Act. Mr. Morton stated that the County's last update was made on June 1, 2010. He discussed the summary of general changes to the model ordinance. He stated that the definition for coastal marshlands was added but did not apply to Cherokee County being that there are no marshlands in the County. He listed the added items to the revised ordinance as being the definition of EnviroCert, Incorporated; the expanded definition of Design Professional; the definition of the Georgia Erosion and Sediment Control Act; and a Minor Erosion and Control Permit, required by Cherokee County, was added for certain activities. He listed those activities as being retaining walls or seawall construction; the construction of single-family residences, when such construction disturbs less than one (1) acre and is not a part of a larger common plan of development or sale with a planned disturbance of equal to or greater than one (1) acre; stream crossings by individual property owners; land disturbing activities less than one (1) acre located within or adjacent to stream buffers or setbacks, lake buffers, floodplains, wetlands, rights-of-way, or drainage easements; and any land disturbing activity requiring engineering coordination, such as storm drainage or storm drainage maintenance. He stated that in addition Silt fence Type "C" was modified to Type "S" to be consistent with the current edition of the *Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control* was added. He stated that they were more or less "housekeeping items".

7.2 Public Hearing for a Modification of Zoning Conditions on Resolution 2003-R-115 (BOC District 4) for property located at 6454 Bells Ferry Road.

Conduct a Public Hearing to consider removal of Condition No. 2 from Resolution 2003-R 115.

NOTE: Applicant has requested withdrawal of this application on 05/31/2017

Jeff Watkins gave a very brief overview, stating that the applicant had requested to be allowed to withdraw the application without prejudice.

Ms. Davis stated since there was withdrawal of the application and nothing was to be considered there would be no reason for a Public Hearing this evening.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

10.1. Chairman Ahrens - Consider Appointment or Reappointment to Sheriff's Office Termination Review Board.

Chairman Ahrens stated that the Sheriff's Office activated a Sheriff's Office Termination Review Board in years past. He stated that the Sheriff has several appointments to the Board and the Board of Commissioners, under the Chairman, has one appointment to the Board. He noted that the current appointee's term is up in the month of June. He stated that unless anyone else had any suggestions, it is his recommendation to reappoint Mr. Ken Hardy to serve for the next two years on the Sheriff's Office Termination Review Board. He stated that Mr. Hardy has been diligent about being a part of the Board for the cases they have heard, and they have more cases coming up. The Chairman stated the importance of the continuity and the experience that Mr. Hardy has had with the Board.

Chairman Ahrens asked Mr. Cooper to pick and choose what items from Consent to go through in deference to time with the special called meeting and heavy agenda. It was decided that the Consent would be skipped for now.

Mr. Cooper began with the County Manager portion.

COUNTY MANAGER

Mr. Cooper went over the thirteen items under the **County Manager's** portion.

12.1 MorphoTrust Professional Services Agreement.

Consider authorization for a 3-year Professional Services Agreement with MorphoTrust in the amount of \$65,819.28 for the maintenance of fingerprint systems and printers at the Sheriff's Office.

12.2 Reinhardt University - Memorandum of Agreement and Paving Request for Baxter Avenue.

Consider Memorandum of Agreement with Reinhardt University for asphalt repairs and resurfacing on campus roadways and request for repair and resurfacing of Baxter Avenue by Cherokee County Roads & Bridges forces in the amount of \$24,264.00, to be reimbursed by Reinhardt University.

12.3 Multi-way STOP Request - Gaddis Road at Huntington Place/Grand Oaks Drive.

Consider a multi-way STOP for the intersection of Gaddis Road and Huntington Place/Grand Oaks Drive.

12.4 CATS DHS 2017 Contract Amendment.

Consider approval of amendment to the FY 2017 DHS contract for CATS operations in the amount of \$140,000 to be rolled into the FY 2018 DHS operating contract.

12.5 Annual Aging Services Agreement.

Consider accepting the annual Aging Subgrant Agreement for State FY2018 (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018) in the total amount of \$687,971.

12.6 Veteran's Court Grant Acceptance.

Consider accepting the State grant for the new Veteran's Treatment Court in the amount of \$89,097, creating a new full time County employee position and authorizing a Budget Amendment to the adopted FY2017 Budget.

12.7 Facility Landscape Maintenance Contract.

Consider awarding the County's standard Professional Services Agreement to the highest evaluated, lowest priced proposer, Georgia Green, in the amount of \$158,595.00 per year.

12.8 New Cubicles for District Attorney's Office.

Consider approving purchase of new cubicles from the lowest bidder, Indoff, in the amount of \$47,136.94 to outfit the existing office space to accommodate needed additional space in the District Attorney's Office.

12.9 Ridge Mill Phase IIA Subdivision - Release of Escrow Funds.

Consider approval of Agreement for Release of Escrow Funds for Ridgemill Unit IIA subdivision.

12.10 Purchase Equipment for Recreation & Parks.

Consider Awarding the Purchase of Various Pieces of Equipment for Recreation & Parks Maintenance to Highest Scoring Proposer, Greenville Turf & Tractor, in the Amount of \$97,599.17. He stated that the equipment is lighter than the other bidder which makes it much easier to prepare the fields and the equipment is much easier to manage with fewer workers. He stated that Greenville Turf & Tractor provides on-site servicing.

12.11 CDBG Annual Action Plan Amendments for 2013 and 2014.

Consider approval of reallocation of CDBG funds in the amount of \$196,114 from ineligible projects from the City of Ball Ground to a qualified construction project for a new senior center in the City of Ball Ground to offer more services to its seniors

12.12 Freehome Fire Station - Parking Lot Addition.

Consider a proposal from Curb-Tech, Inc. to install nine (9) additional parking spaces at the Freehome Fire Station and Community Center in the amount of \$16,414.00.

12.13 Ratify Notice of Election to Redeem related to RRDA Bonds.

Ratification of Notice of Election to Redeem related to Resource Recovery Development Authority of Cherokee County (RRDA) Solid Waste Disposal Revenue Bonds, Series 2007A. He stated that the reason for the crunch is that the Bank of New York Mellon must provide 30-day notice to the bond holders

of the call. He stated that if no call is made by July 1 then the call will have to be postponed until January 2018. He stated it would forgo savings that would be incurred if called by July 1.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES / COMPENSATION

Chairman Ahrens provided a list of Boards and Committees to the Commissioners. He stated that he wanted to bring the Board up-to-date on the Boards and Committees that the Board of Commissioners work with, the compensation that is currently paid, and if in the future there is any consideration to increase the amounts it can be reviewed and addressed. He stated that there was a letter received from someone in the community asking for consideration to raise the pay for the members of the Planning Commission. He stated that he was not recommending an increase now or at any time but wanted to leave it as an open-ended consideration. Commissioner Gordon stated that he did some research to see how the County compares to other areas. He stated that Gwinnett is \$150 for their Planning Commission members, Holly Springs is \$49, and Woodstock is \$50.

ADJOURN

Hearing no further items, Commissioner Gordon made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 4:29 p.m. to discuss property acquisition, personnel matters and pending or threatened litigation. Commissioner Gunnin seconded. The resulting vote was Passed, 4-0. Absent: Kovacs