

**MINUTES**  
**SECOND BUDGET MEETING OF THE**  
**COLQUITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2015 - 2016**  
**WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2015**  
**5:00 o'clock p.m.**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The second budget meeting for Fiscal Year 2015 - 2016 was called to order at 5:00 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Terry R. Clark. The meeting was duly called and advertised.

**PRESENT:** Those present were Commissioners Luke Strong, Winfred Giddens, Marc DeMott, Donna Herndon, Paul Nagy, Johnny Hardin, Chairman Terry R. Clark, County Administrator Chas Cannon, Finance Director Wayne Putnal, and County Clerk Melissa Lawson.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Captain Julius Cox, Chief Compliance Officer Justin H. Cox, and Alan Mauldin with The Moultrie Observer.

**FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016 BUDGET CONTINUED:** Mr. Cannon distributed a list of options for the board to consider in order to meet the recommended FY 2015-2016 budget request of \$21,665,968.00:

- To avoid utilization of reserve funds, raise the millage rate by 2.0 mills (1.5 mandated by Georgia Department of Revenue) in the unincorporated areas and 0.5 mills in the incorporated areas;
- Raise the millage rate by 1.7 mills in the unincorporated areas of the county (1.5 mandated by Georgia Department of Revenue);
- Raise the millage rate by 0.2 mills in the incorporated areas of the county;
- Raise the millage by an undetermined amount in combination with the following options:
  - Sale of cell phone tower easement - \$150,000.00 in revenue
  - Use up to \$500,000.00 in reserves
  - Cut Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) completely, or reduce percentage;
  - Cut Merit Pay Increases
  - Shift capital purchases to projected sale of County Property
  - Reduce contingency funding
  - Additional minor cuts across departments

Mr. Cannon presented a list of capital purchases over \$5,000.00, noting that the various funding sources for these purchases were designated by color.

(Clerk of Court Lynn Purvis entered the meeting at 5:06 p.m.)

Per a prior request from Commissioner DeMott, Mr. Cannon presented a breakdown of restricted and unrestricted reserve funds.

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In addition, Mr. Cannon presented an inventory list of all vehicles in the Sheriff's Department fleet, stating that Captain Julius Cox would explain the list in detail during the meeting.

Commissioner Strong questioned if pay increases were included in the budget. Mr. Cannon replied that they were included.

Mr. Cannon presented information relating to how the proposed millage rate increases would impact property owners in Colquitt County, based upon an average of residential and homestead values in the county.

Commissioner Strong inquired as to how much revenue a .02 mill increase would generate. Mr. Putnal replied that this increase would generate approximately \$180,000.00.

Mr. Cannon stated that options were still available when considering how to best balance the budget, but recommended retaining the Cost of Living Adjustment for county employees.

Commissioner Strong questioned the exact year that the board last raised the millage rate. Mr. Cannon replied that it was raised one mill in 2014.

**SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT:** At this time, Mr. Cannon gave a brief overview of the Sheriff's Department budget, stating that it included a moderate level of capital purchases, as well as a new pay matrix to improve recruitment and retention of quality employees. Mr. Cannon stated that this budget also included the 3% COLA increase, as well as three new employee positions.

Mr. Putnal proceeded to highlight particular areas of the Sheriff's Department budget, by division. Mr. Putnal noted that a vehicle was being requested for the Criminal Investigations division, with Captain Cox stating that insurance recovery funds were anticipated for a recently wrecked truck.

Mr. Putnal noted that any increases in salaries and wages and group insurance were mainly due to the inclusion of the Cost of Living Adjustments and implementation of the pay matrix step increases.

School Resource Officer (SRO) positions were discussed in detail, with Mr. Cannon noting that as a result of recent negotiations, the Board of Education agreed to a higher rate of reimbursement to the county for these positions.

Commissioner Hardin noted that the provision of vehicles for the School Resource Officers was not a shared expense, but was funded solely by the county.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the number of School Resource Officers being requested. Mr. Cannon stated that currently, the Board of Education was only requesting three.

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From a law enforcement standpoint, Captain Cox declared that the Sheriff's Department was better able to recommend the necessary number of School Resource Officers required in order to guarantee the safety of students.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the cost of vehicles to be purchased for the School Resource Officers. Mr. Putnal responded that it would cost approximately \$65,000.00.

Mr. Cannon stated his hope for continued negotiations regarding the provision of School Resource Officers and costs associated to provide them.

Commissioner Nagy stated his belief that this was definitely a step in the right direction.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if scheduled work hours of the School Resource Officers conformed to school hours.

Captain Cox stated that while school was in session, the School Resource Officers were dedicated to the school, but during the summer, the Sheriff's department was able to fully utilize the personnel.

Commissioner Nagy commended these individuals, stating that these positions were inclusive of extensive overtime hours.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if the budget would be reduced if the school board did not request more than three School Resource Officers. Mr. Cannon stated his belief that it was better to budget for four of these individuals, with adjustments made later if necessary.

Captain Cox stated that it required a special individual to fill the position of School Resource Officer. Commissioner Nagy agreed, commending the performance of one of these individuals during a recent disturbance at Charlie A. Gray Middle School.

Mr. Putnal continued to review respective divisions of the overall law enforcement budget.

Commissioner Herndon questioned exactly how COLA increases were being represented in the proposed budget.

Mr. Putnal stated that the COLA was calculated on an overall departmental basis, not by individual employee.

Small equipment purchases for the Sheriff's department were discussed at length, to include cameras, DUI testing kits, and taser cartridges.

Mr. Putnal reviewed requested capital outlay purchases for the Criminal Investigations division, including, but not limited to, one vehicle and the purchase of tablets in order to test their effectiveness in the field.

Mr. Putnal stated that five pursuit vehicles were being requested for utilization by the Uniform Patrol division, stating that these purchases would be funded by SPLOST proceeds, as well as the warning devices for these vehicles.

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Mr. Putnal discussed the Drug Enforcement Team division budget at length, stating that a new position was being requested.

Captain Cox attributed the request of this position to a lack of City participation in what was formerly a joint city/county venture. As a result, Captain Cox stated that the Sheriff's department had no choice but to assume full responsibility for the drug enforcement team, but voiced his hope that an agreement would be reached by the city and county regarding funding.

At this time, Captain Cox discussed a request for the ceiling on the third floor of the Justice Administration building to be completed, in order to provide much needed space for a secured evidence room. Mr. Putnal stated that he was proposing that this be funded through SPLOST proceeds. Mr. Putnal also noted the inclusion of one vehicle and one computer tablet for the drug enforcement team.

Captain Cox discussed a request for a utility pole camera, stating this type of surveillance tool was imperative in order to combat covert drug operations within the county.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if this camera was similar to the one utilized to watch the new school. Captain Cox replied that it was, with the camera possessing the capability to rotate 360 degrees.

At this time, the department budget for the Jail was discussed in detail. Mr. Putnal reviewed individual line item requests, citing that they were very similar to previous year requests. Mr. Putnal stated that the major cost factor for this particular department was the number of inmates, which in turn necessitates food, clothing, medical care, and the provision of sanitary supplies.

Mr. Cannon again mentioned ongoing negotiations with Colquitt Regional Medical Center in the hopes of significantly decreasing medical costs at the jail and prison, and mentioned energy cost savings as a result of the upcoming energy audit.

Captain Cox discussed the great need for a uniform, updated door lock system at the jail, emphasizing the need for protection and security at a jail that was often occupied at maximum capacity.

A list of small equipment item requests for the jail was briefly discussed.

Mr. Cannon stated that the main changes in the overall Sheriff's Department budget consisted of COLA increases, vehicles, three new positions, and the request for implementation of a proposed pay matrix system. At this time, Mr. Cannon called upon Captain Cox to explain the proposed pay matrix system to the board.

Captain Cox stated that the pay matrix system was based on a prior study performed by Maximus. He explained that every employee was evaluated according to a rank and file structure, stating there was no uniformity in salaries for people with similar positions and tenure.

Captain Cox stated that in order to achieve uniformity, increases would be seen for some employees, while some would have no increase. He further stated that the implementation of the proposed pay matrix system would provide a uniform guide for rewarding superior performing employees.

Mr. Cannon stated that the budget for the overall Sheriff's Department included the pay matrix and COLA adjustments.

At this time, Captain Cox announced that the Sheriff's Department did not request merit increases for any law enforcement employee in the previous fiscal budget.

Commissioner DeMott questioned the dollar amount of merit increases, without the COLA increase, and questioned the exact percentage when compared to the COLA.

Commissioner DeMott also questioned the combined percentage of the COLA and pay matrix increases.

Commissioner Herndon requested clarification that law enforcement personnel would receive both the COLA and pay matrix step increase. Mr. Cannon replied that, if approved by the board, they would receive both, according to the budget's current form.

Commissioner Hardin questioned the total dollar amount of the COLA and pay matrix increases for the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Cannon stated that the Sheriff's Department was dealing with a high rate of turnover, and wanted to increase the retention and recruitment of high performing employees.

Commissioner DeMott voiced concern regarding granting a higher percentage increase to law enforcement employees versus other county employees. Captain Cox argued that the same job duties were not being performed.

Commissioner Herndon voiced her concern that the proposed budget included new things not previously discussed with the commission. Commissioner Strong stated that he understood Commissioner Herndon's viewpoint.

Mr. Cannon stated that anything new was being presented for the board's consideration, emphasizing that it was ultimately the decision of the board as a whole to deny or implement any proposal presented for their review.

Captain Cox stated that inability of any employee to perform was not tolerated by the Sheriff's Department.

Again, Commissioner Herndon stated that she would have preferred this information, as well as the information concerning the transition away from inmate labor discussed at the first budget meeting, presented to the board prior to the budget process.

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Commissioner DeMott commended Captain Cox on the proposed matrix plan, but voiced his hesitation in implementing both the COLA and pay matrix simultaneously, stating that a blended system might be the best solution.

Captain Cox stated that he understood, but voiced his opinion that the quality of law enforcement personnel would continue to decline without a solid pay matrix place in use.

Commissioner Nagy questioned the exact amount of the pay matrix increases alone. Mr. Putnal replied that it was approximately \$105,000.00.

Mr. Cannon stated that an alternative for the board, if interested in the pay matrix plan, was to consider it during future budget deliberations.

Commissioner DeMott stated that perhaps it was a better idea to implement the COLA presently, and implement a salary administration plan in the future.

Mr. Cannon stated that the advantage of a step plan was to provide interested parties an idea of advancement, both position and salary wise. Captain Cox agreed, stating this was essential with any department, not just the field of law enforcement.

Commissioner Herndon voiced her appreciation for new ideas, stating that forward progress was impossible without them.

Commissioner Nagy questioned if it would be easier for the Sheriff's department to recruit with the step matrix plan or with the COLA.

Captain Cox stated that the COLA was based on the cost of living, which was hard to predict. In comparison, Captain Cox stated that the step increase would be based on the performance of the employee.

Commissioner Hardin stated that unlike any other business where the goal was to make money, county government was unique, in that it did not exist to make money, and relied mainly on property taxes and any additional revenue generated by an enterprise fund.

Commissioner DeMott questioned if the step increase could be implemented within the COLA itself, in order to establish a baseline for the pay matrix.

Commissioner Strong questioned how many other departmental budgets were inclusive of a pay matrix increase. Mr. Cannon replied that the Sheriff's department was the sole one, with the exception for the money set aside in order to consider recommendations for merit increases by department heads for employees within their respective departments.

Mr. Cannon suggested reducing the \$100,000.00 allotted for merit pay increases to be approved and allotted at his discretion, to \$75,000.00. He further suggested implementing the step increase within the Sheriff's department the next budget year, and stated that he was not opposed to having the entire county on a pay matrix step system.

Captain Cox stated it was imperative to implement a pay matrix system.

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Commissioner Strong suggested taking more time to digest the information in order to make an informed decision.

Mr. Cannon stated that the main argument for implementation of the pay matrix system within the Sheriff's Department was in order to recruit and retain quality employees.

The board recessed for a five minute break.

Upon return from break, Captain Cox reviewed an inventory list of all vehicles within the Sheriff's Department fleet, sorted by division.

Captain Cox stated that any vehicles assigned to vacant positions are used in place of any vehicle that was out of operation.

Commissioner Hardin questioned the intended purpose of the vehicles being purchased utilizing SPLOST funds. Captain Cox stated these vehicles were intended for uniform patrol and also stated that the new vehicles would replace existing vehicles within the fleet with the highest mileage.

Mr. Cannon highlighted the recent success of selling older Crown Victoria's within the department's fleet on GovDeals.com, an online auction website utilized by several counties and municipalities. Captain Cox stated that currently the department has three seized vehicles ready to be sold upon the website.

Chairman Clark questioned how the Tahoe that was purchased for the department was performing. Captain Cox replied very well, with the unit in question currently being utilized as a canine unit. Captain Cox reminded the board that the Tahoe was purchased due to Ford eliminating the Crown Victoria vehicle models, and stated that the department was able to make extensive adjustments to better adapt it to the department's needs.

At this time, Mr. Cannon stated that the county was also reviewing the Intergovernmental Jail Housing agreement with the City of Moultrie, stating that the cost charged to the city had not increased since 1996. Mr. Cannon stated that he expected additional revenue as the result of this renegotiation.

Commissioner Herndon also mentioned the possibility of eliminating other items from the budget in order to work towards pay increases, including the issue of driving county vehicles home.

From a law enforcement view, Captain Cox stated that he liked to have Sheriff's department employees drive vehicles home, due to the fact that it deterred crime in the adjacent neighborhoods.

Commissioner Herndon stated that she was not just referring to law enforcement employees, but to all county employees that drive home county vehicles. She further stated that it might not amount to much fiscally, but it would definitely be a good starting point.

Captain Cox stated that this particular perk also helped in the recruitment and retention of quality employees.

Commissioner Herndon asked Justin H. Cox, Chief Compliance Officer, if his duties necessitated after hours use of his county vehicle. He replied that due to the safety and emergency management functions of his job, he often utilized his vehicle after hours.

Mr. Cannon stated that there was a response aspect to an employee driving a vehicle home, stating that he made a point not to grant a vehicle for at home use for an employee whose position did not warrant it.

Again, Captain Cox stated a county vehicle was a perk currently used to recruit and retain employees.

Mr. Cannon remarked that more substantial savings could be identified in the areas of healthcare, technology, and through the elimination of inefficiencies and redundancies.

Chairman Clark remarked that Mr. Cannon had already eliminated most instances of employees utilizing vehicles when their position did not warrant it.

In closing, Captain Cox urged the commission to closely consider maintenance and possible future expansion to the county jail.

Chairman Clark questioned Captain Cox regarding the increased female population at the jail, as compared to when it was first constructed. Captain Cox discussed the significant increase, stating this was a sign of changes within society.

Chairman Clark mentioned the need for an additional pod at the jail. Captain Cox stated this would soon be a necessity.

**CLERK OF COURT:** Mr. Putnal reviewed the Clerk of Court's budget, stating that recommendations were pretty close to what was requested by Mrs. Purvis, with the slight increases in salaries and group insurance being attributed to the recommended COLA increase.

Mr. Putnal stated that \$2,000.00 was being included for replacement of computers. Mr. Cannon stated that these particular funds were budgeted within the Information Systems department, with the IT staff being the most experienced at researching and finding the best price for these particular purchases.

Mrs. Purvis remarked that the duties of her deputy clerks now necessitated laptops and printers within the courtroom.

Mrs. Purvis stated that she began all employees within her department as office assistants, in the amount of \$10.00 per hour. Upon promotion to deputy clerks, she stated that several of her employees had not received a raise in more than seven years. Ms. Purvis further stated

that it was her belief that this was a definite problem and encouraged the board to approve the COLA increase for employees.

At this time, Mrs. Purvis stated that she would be glad to answer any questions from the board.

Commissioner Strong asked if any of Mrs. Purvis' employees were included in the merit increases distributed by Mr. Cannon within the previous budget. Mr. Cannon replied that approximately five of Mrs. Purvis' employees received merit increases.

Mr. Cannon stated that he made an effort to encourage department heads to reward their highest performers for their hard work and determination. Mr. Cannon stated this was imperative in order to retain these competent employees.

Mr. Cannon stated that the county would continue to struggle with compensation for employees when competing with the private sector. Again, Mr. Cannon referred to the high rate of employee turnover within the last several years.

Commissioner Herndon stated that some county employees risk their life on a daily basis for the safety of Colquitt County and its citizens.

Mr. Cannon stated this was why it was imperative to seek state reimbursements, grant opportunities, and proactively convey the benefits of TSPLOST to the community.

Commissioner Nagy stated that even if the county did not change the millage rate, constituents are still faced with increases.

Mrs. Purvis questioned Mr. Putnal regarding the status of a potential records repository for the county, citing the great need for additional storage for her department.

Mr. Putnal stated that the money was included in the 2002 SPLOST referendum, and several options have been considered, with none yet coming to fruition.

Mrs. Purvis stated that the Grand Jury would be inspecting her department soon.

Mr. Cannon mentioned the possibility of completing the top floor of the Annex, or purchasing additional property to serve as a records repository.

Commissioner Nagy mentioned the possibility of utilizing the central office of the Board of Education, with that personnel relocating to the existing high school.

Commissioner Hardin questioned if all rooms in the Courthouse were occupied. Mrs. Purvis replied that they were, with weight of the records being an issue regarding the upper floors.

Mr. Cannon discussed completion of the third floor of the Annex. Commissioner Hardin stated that if this were accomplished, it would create available storage space within the Courthouse.

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At this time, Mr. Cannon reviewed available options for the board to consider to in order to fund budget requests.

Commissioner Nagy stated his belief that it was a little late to begin implementation of a pay matrix system, but further stated that the argument made perfect sense. He further stated he did not like the idea of not treating all employees the same, and suggested implementing the COLA within the current budget, with the implementation of the pay matrix to be considered in the next budget year.

Commissioner DeMott suggested granting the 3% COLA and mentioned the possibility of a blended system in which to grant step increases.

Discussion ensued regarding the COLA and pay matrix increases.

Commissioner Nagy stated that the pay matrix system was a great idea, but stated that such a fundamental change to the pay structure in the midst of the budget process would be hard to implement due to time restraints.

Mr. Cannon stated that he would continue to research matters regarding School Resource Officer funding.

Discussion ensued regarding the benefits of School Resource Officers and equity regarding funding.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Commissioner Hardin made the motion at 7:06 p.m. to go into Executive Session to discuss the disposition of real estate. Commissioner Giddens made a second. The motion carried unanimously. (An affidavit, as required by Georgia Law, was executed by all Board members present stating under oath that the subject matter of the closed meeting was devoted to the matters within the exception provided by law and identified the specific relevant exception as provided by law. The affidavit is hereby made a portion of the minutes by reference thereto.)

**REGULAR SESSION:** Commissioner Hardin made the motion at 7:15 p.m. to reconvene into regular session. Commissioner Nagy made a second. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cannon reminded the board of upcoming budget meetings to be held on Tuesday, May 19 and Thursday, May 21, both beginning at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Terry R. Clark  
Chairman

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Melissa Lawson  
County Clerk

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Approved:

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# AFFIDAVIT

This is to certify that the Colquitt County Board of Commissioners held an Executive Session Meeting (closed meeting) on May 13, 2015, at 1:06 o'clock a.m./p.m. The majority of the quorum present voted in the open meeting to go into Executive Session (closed meeting). The subject matter discussed was applicable under the following code section(s):

- O.C.G.A. 50-14-2(1) - Consultation with an attorney regarding pending or potential legal action.
- O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(4) - Discussion of future acquisition of real estate. (Notice was given as required and minutes taken.)
- O.C.G.A. 50-14-3(6) - Discussion of personnel matters.

I further certify that the subject matter of the Executive Session (closed meeting) was devoted to matters within the exception provided by law and the above checked identifies the specific relevant exception.

This 13<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

Terry Clark  
Terry Clark, Chairman

Winfred Giddens  
Winfred Giddens, Commissioner

Donna Herndon  
Donna Herndon, Commissioner

Johnny Hardin  
Johnny Hardin, Commissioner

Luke Strong  
Luke Strong, Commissioner

Marc DeMott  
Marc DeMott, Commissioner

Paul Nagy  
Paul Nagy, Commissioner

Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 13<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

Melissa Lawson  
County Clerk or Notary Public  
My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

