

MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET HEARING  
JUNE 4, 2007  
MINUTES

Chairman Leatherman convened the public hearing on the proposed FY 07/08 budget as noticed. All Board Members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, County Attorney, County Finance Director, members of the news media and interested citizens were present.

Chairman Leatherman welcomed everyone and opened the floor for public comments asking speakers to state their names and where they live.

Dan Brigman, Superintendent of Schools, stated he wished to clarify the operational budget requests for the schools, distributed a handout outlining capital outlay and current expense requests, and requested favorable consideration of their budget requests.

Darlene McDowell, Belmont Estates resident and school teacher, outlined the many duties and responsibilities of Macon County teachers, stated she didn't understand why teachers are overlooked and added teachers need to be recognized as the hard working professionals they are.

Dot Gibson explained this may not be the correct setting but she needed to talk with the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Gibson stated she has been a Macon County resident for 47 years, was a former employee of the Macon County Sheriff's Department, her husband is a local businessman and they have raised their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren here. She stated they have taught their children to be law abiding citizens but some of them have made decisions against that teaching. Ms. Gibson explained while visiting one of her sons at the Macon County Detention Center she had been video taped and the tape was displayed at the annual Christmas party hosted by the Sheriff as a degrading slide show with racial slurs. She said when she questioned the Sheriff he said yes she had been in the slide show but not in a bad way. Ms. Gibson stated she felt the Sheriff should be held accountable for misuse of tax funds in this matter. Chairman Leatherman stated he appreciated Ms. Gibson's comments and he would contact her later to discuss the matter explaining this particular meeting was for input on the proposed budget.

Norm Roberts stated a recent article from the Franklin Press about the budget did not address fund balance and questioned what fund balance was "as we speak" and what happens if the budget is adopted, what will fund balance be then and asked the Board to ask the paper to report fund balance.

Charlie Cowie, resident at 101 Ervin Stockton Road, stated he appreciated how everyone works together and he felt the Board is going to do what they think is best. He explained he had lived here for about thirty five years and was concerned about taxes. He added people move here because of the climate of the people and he didn't want to tarnish the attitude to the point that people have to move out because of taxes. Mr. Cowie also expressed concerns about the fire tax and the manner in which landfill fees are collected.

Bob Lavery of 45 Whispering Pine Trail in Mill Creek complimented the Board on the budget work session on June 3rd stating everyone learned something. Mr. Lavery addressed the school's budget and stated he supported cutting the capital outlay school's budget, that he disagreed with the quoted graduation rate, and commented on the merit pay for teachers stating the real culprits were Raleigh and Washington. Mr. Lavery stated the cost of everything is going up, someone has to put a stop to it and the Board of Commissioners is the only people the citizens can talk to. He added he didn't mean to downgrade teachers

but schools have to educate parents as to the importance of education.

Catherine Robb registered to speak but declined.

John Cleaveland , resident of 539 Foreman Road, Highlands, expressed appreciation for the revenue neutral tax rate on the right hand but added the left hand will take it back if a land transfer tax is implemented. He added real estate sales in Highlands are slow and sometimes you have to fund needs, not wants. He stated untold dollars have been spent on schools and in his opinion the entire system is in total meltdown and has to be changed.

Mr. Cleveland requested the Board to reconsider the one percent real estate transfer fee stating real estate can not carry everything in the county.

Don Swanson, 607 Chestnut Lane, questioned the difference in fund balance versus bank balance. Mr. Swanson questioned the county's health self-insurance reserve fund and why the county didn't join the state health insurance plan.

There were no further comments from the public and Board members were given an opportunity to speak.

Commissioner Simpson stated the children are our number one priority, it takes money to operate schools and the County has tried to take care of the schools.

Commissioner Davis stated he is glad to be an American where people have the right to express their opinions, expressed that some people who advocated a tax rate of 25 mills are now complaining with the \$.245 rate. He added that he takes the responsibility of serving as a county commissioner very seriously.

Commissioner Beale stated this was his first budget as a commissioner and it has been a learning process. He explained he had three children go through the Macon County Schools who received a good education but the whole process of being a teacher has changed since he was a student. He added that our children and elderly need to be taken care of.

Commissioner McClellan stated there had been a lot of hard work on the budget and no one has all the answers. He added needs and priorities change and he is willing to look at those things.

Chairman Leatherman thanked everyone for taking a part in the process and reminded everyone of the dedication of the Veterans Memorial on the 6th at 5 p.m. stating those are the ones who have afforded us the opportunity to have public forums such as this one. He explained that the Board had only asked for an option along with the other 99 counties to implement a 1% land transfer tax and, should the county vote to exercise that option, it could result in a reduction in ad valorem tax up to six cents. Chairman Leatherman stated between Raleigh, Washington D.C., the no child left behind program, etc. there is a melt down in the system but teachers provide some of the most stability, discipline, nourishing meals, etc. that some children get and feels our local teachers and staff provide the best education system in the state.

There were no further comments and the hearing was adjourned.

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Sam K. Greenwood, County Manager  
Clerk to the Board

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Charles D. Leatherman  
Board Chairman

