

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Public Hearing Minutes
August 8th 2017
6:00 p.m.

Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Horton, Commissioner Heiney, Commissioner Traylor, and Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Zellner, and County clerk Davidson. Absent from the meeting was Attorney Mayfield.

Chairman Glass called the Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. and stated that the task was to hear Public Comments regarding the proposed millage rate increase. The board is proposing a 1 mill increase over the past year and this is approximately \$40.00 on a \$100,000.00 house of assessed value. Chairman Glass stated that the handouts include a table with the increases based on assessed value if they go up to the 1 mill increase.

Chairman Glass mentioned that there was a typo on the handout with the \$250,000 value showing 989.29 for a 1 mill increase. The handout is attached to the minutes.

County Administrator Zellner shared a Power Point presentation. Chairman Glass stated that whether you live in the City or the County all of the property owners pay property taxes. If you live in the City of Barnesville, you also pay property taxes to the City of Barnesville. All of Lamar County property owners pay school taxes. The school taxes go to the Board of Education and are completely separate from the County taxes. Lamar County residents, including those within the Cities of Barnesville, Milner and Aldora will pay a combined \$5.6 million this year in property taxes. This will go toward the \$9.8 million budget. Property taxes make up approximately 67 percent of the overall revenue contained in the County's general fund budget. Looking at non-tax revenues, they have been going down for several years largely because of State mandates or factors that are beyond the Board's control. The TAVT tax that you pay on new vehicles has replaced the birthday tax on tags that you used to pay. We don't get the ad valorem part but we do get a portion of the TAVT. This also hurts our SPLOST and LOST revenues. This is a penny for the Special Purpose Local Option sales Tax (SPLOST) and the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST). Another source of revenue decline is the inmates that we house at the jail from other Cities. Last year the inmates from the City of Griffin were moved to the Spalding County jail. There was a long time disagreement between the City of Griffin and the Spalding County and the new Spalding County Sheriff convinced the City of Griffin to move their inmates to the Spalding County jail. They charged more per day but they didn't have to transport prisoners and apparently it worked because they are still keeping the prisoners in the Spalding County jail. There has also been a decline from other Counties who are now housing their own prisoners. If you look at the expense side, Law Enforcement and Courts are forty five percent of the budget and this includes all of the judicial offices. The other services we have to pay for are mandated by State legislature or constitutional requirements and this is fifteen percent of our budget. The remaining County government functions and the most significant percent is spent on operating the Public works Department which is eleven percent of the budget. other services funded by the County property taxes include: Parks and Recreation, Animal control, Business Licenses, Building Permits, Building and Zoning & Environmental Inspections, Code

Enforcement, Public Library, County Attorney's services, Indigent Burials, Economic and Industrial Development, Agricultural Extension, Archives, Financial Management and Record Keeping.” The Budget Comparison between 2017 and 2018 was shown and is attached to the minutes.

Public Comments

Richard Adams of 637 Piedmont Road addressed the board and stated that he had been speaking with Commissioner Traylor. He stated that after looking at the handout which started with a \$100,000.00 house assessment he realized he lives in a shack. Mr. Adams stated that a few months ago he went to the polls and voted against the SPLOST tax and it passed and he didn't make any phone calls. He just said okay it passed. Mr. Adams saw in the paper that money was spent to move a grave yard and it didn't matter to him whether it stayed or goes so he didn't get involved. Chairman Glass pointed out that the County is not spending any money on this. Mr. Adams stated that whether it is coming out of two different buckets it is coming out of one pocket, his. Chairman Glass stated that he shouldn't be paying any City taxes on Piedmont Road. Mr. Adams stated that he stood corrected but he still felt the pain. Mr. Adams stated that to vote for an increase in taxes is a price of a good meal. Mr. Adams stated that he didn't own a large piece of property. Mr. Adams stated that he is just had his property appraised at \$55,000.00 but he pays taxes on \$65,000.00 and when he called the Tax Assessors office he was told that his appraisal was meaningless. Mr. Adams said that as a home owner and there has got to be another answer than going after the home owner. He said he got off work and came straight to the meeting. He was told that they are trying to move the grave yard to bring in more industry and he appreciates that but if the County has a low homeowners tax then this will encourage people to come to our County to commute to Atlanta. Mr. Adams is interested in having a lower home owner's tax which will encourage more people to buy homes which will give us more money. Chairman Glass responded by saying that home owners doesn't generate enough revenue to offset the services that are provided in the County. Industrial and Commercial property owners generate more revenue. Pike County has less industry than Lamar County and their millage rate is 13.596. Lamar County's is currently 11.592. Their tax base is entirely based on homes. Mr. Adams asked if Pike County had more home owners than Lamar County. Tax Assessor Haddock responded to Mr. Adams question by saying that the residents are about the same and requested that he could come see her and she would be happy to help him with his tax appraisal.

Kent Kingsley of 1366 Hwy 36 East addressed the board and disagreed with the Chairman that homes don't bring in more tax revenue. Mr. Kingsley stated that a few weeks ago he had some people from Buckhead that are retired interested in purchasing the Radford/Dukes home on Thomaston Street. The asking price for the home is \$499,000.00. They also were looking at homes in Madison and Putnam Counties. Although they liked the house, they didn't like the fact that they would have to pay more taxes than they would have to pay in Madison or Eatonton. They called Mr. Kingsley to tell him that the house was the number one house on their list but that they weren't going to buy it because the taxes in Lamar County were higher than in Eatonton and Madison. Mr. Kingsley stated that he used to be the Chairman and the taxes were pretty low in Lamar County then. He did some research and found out that in Barnesville it was 34.39, in

Eatonton it was 32.636 and in Madison it was 32.023. Mr. Kingsley said that now we have a \$500,000.00 home that he could have sold but it is unoccupied because of the taxes and now the board is going to raise the property taxes even more. Mr. Kingsley stated that he had never had anyone decide not to buy a house because of the tax rate in Lamar County. It does have an effect and he happened to be the beneficiary of this. Mr. Kingsley addressed the size of the homes that are allowed to be built in Lamar County. It was determined from the board that the minimum size home is 1200 square feet and that builders and developers would rather build a 1200 square foot home than an 1800 square foot home because it turns faster. Mr. Kingsley asked if the board cared what the builders want because they are creating conditions that will reduce revenue for Lamar County. Chairman Glass stated that the Dukes are still paying the taxes on the home even though the house is unoccupied. Mr. Kingsley stated that this was true but asked if they would rather have the \$500,000.00 home occupied so that the owners are doing things and buying things in the community or would they rather have an empty house. Mr. Kingsley said that he is opposed to the tax increase and felt like that there was a better way. Mr. Kingsley asked if the board had gone through every line item and every function that is funded and prioritized them from A to Z from the most important to the least important. Mr. Kingsley stated that Law Enforcement is the number one priority to him. Chairman Glass stated that they don't have an A-Z list. Mr. Kingsley said that if they haven't done that then how can they decide what is the priority for funding. Chairman Glass then stated that they did that by going from A-D and E-G just not A-Z. Mr. Kingsley said that in looking at the list that was handed out at the meeting there are only four things that have been cut. The Fire Station Building, the Courts, Soil Conservation and Public Works. Mr. Kingsley asked if the cuts were the bottom priority or were they funded from last year. Chairman Glass stated that they reviewed the items in the Budget Workshops over the summer and that's where the details were reviewed. Mr. Kingsley stated that he knew some things must be funded but asked the board if they had done a cost Benefit Analysis regarding which thing provides the most bang for your buck. Mr. Kingsley said that if they had not, then deciding on a 1 mill increase was premature because they haven't really looked at what they could cut. Mr. Kingsley said that when he was Chairman he never asked for a tax increase in Lamar County and he could look at every citizen and tell them every penny that they were spending. Mrs. Kingsley said that if the board had not done a cost analysis to find where they could cut it was time to table it and start over. Chairman Glass asked Mr. Kingsley what he was talking about and Mr. Kingsley said that he was talking about what they are getting out of it and were they getting the benefit for what they are spending on it. Chairman Glass asked if he was talking about a monetary value of what you put in and what you get out. Mr. Kingsley used an Army term and said, "I'm not telling you how to suck eggs but, I'm saying that if you haven't looked at it then you need to." Commissioner Heiney stated that he was at every budget meeting and stated that the board had conducted 5 Budget Workshop meetings along with fifteen hours to discuss the budget of every Department, line item by line item, and had worked hard on cutting expenses. Mr. Kingsley responded by saying, "Three lines is all you could come up with to cut?" Commissioner Heiney stated that everyone is invited to come to these meetings. Mr. Kingsley said that people don't generally come to meetings if you are doing the right thing. Mr. Kingsley wanted to know what Department they got the least benefit from. Commissioner Thrash said that this was Public Safety and the Courts. Chairman Glass said it was the Towaliga Circuit. Mr.

Kingsley said, "Where are you getting the most benefit from your investment? What activity provides the least activity for the dollars spent?" Chairman Glass stated that they reviewed the budget in clumps. The courts are a good example. The District Attorney's office, the Public Defender's office. We don't have control over the staff and for three or four years we have been pushed back. Chairman Glass again stated that they don't have an A-Z priority and every Commissioner has a different single priority. Commissioner Thrash stated that they pay for Public Transportation and Entitlement Programs are one of her biggest pet peeves.

Commissioner Thrash addressed the citizens and wondered why tax payers are paying to transport someone back and forth to work. She said that when she was growing up her parents took her places. They didn't have a transportation service that they could pick up the phone and call. There are some things with this aspect that the board could look at and say that they aren't going to pay that anymore and then the board will be back in the room like they were five years ago when they said don't cut DFACS and don't cut Public Transportation. Mr. Kingsley said that is what the board signed up for to make those tough decisions. Mr. Kingsley said that two or three people shouldn't affect the ultimate decision that you have to make but from what he saw there is a very scarce number of cuts and it seems to him that the board should be able to get to a half a mill increase or a three quarter mill increase and from what he saw there wasn't a lot of pencil sharpening. Mr. Kingsley concluded by saying that he wasn't in the budget meetings.

Vice-Chairman Horton stated that he has respect for Mr. Kingsley and he hopes that one day there will be a flat tax for everyone so as to get it off the home owner. Vice-Chairman Horton stated that when Mr. Kingsley was Chairman they raised the millage once and Mr. Kingsley interjected that he voted against it. Mr. Kingsley said they raised expenditures dramatically and gave direction to those Commissioners that if they reduced the amount of increase then they wouldn't have to raise the millage rate. Mr. Kingsley said that when he ran for Congressman he was accused of raising the millage rate even though he was against it. Vice-Chairman Horton stated that his platform used to be to never raise taxes but things were running smooth because the revenues were coming in and the economy was good. When the economy hit rock bottom we hadn't put anything back. Mr. Kingsley said that Government is supposed to be run like a business. He had a franchise that made a lot of money and real estate took a turn and started declining. He couldn't raise the revenues so he had to cut expenses. He said that he couldn't raise taxes and he couldn't raise revenue. When you have revenue and an expenditure imbalance, the government is the only one that has the luxury of arbitrarily raising their revenue. The folks sitting out here or me running my franchise didn't have that possibility. Mr. Kingsley said that his point is that there is a negative effect to raising property taxes and it is evident by those in the house that the board didn't sell it so take a look at what you can shave.

Brenda Ross of 386 Ingram Road addressed the board and stated that she was concerned that taxes were being raised since she is on a fixed income due to being retired. Mrs. Ross stated that her property taxes may not go up by much but an increase is an increase. Mrs. Ross stated that in her own general budget if she doesn't have the money to buy something she doesn't buy it. Mrs. Ross stated that she is concerned about the cuts in Public Works and Roads because they had only scraped her road one time this year. Mrs. Ross said that she knew the road was dirt when she moved there but the road is getting in worse shape. They put in a new culvert but there is still

pot holes in the road and at some point in time she thought that they would have paved the road. Ms. Ross stated that to her the most important thing in the County is Law Enforcement, Fire, Emergency Medical, and Roads. It used to be that the Commissioners were Commissioners of Roads. That is what it said when you looked in the phone books. Mrs. Ross stated that it bothers her that Public Works and Roads have gone down for 2018 when other roads that are out there are in bad shape and for this to be the 21st century and we still have dirt roads in Lamar County. This is a shame because most all the roads in the County should be paved. Mrs. Ross stated that even though it is probably a done deal with setting the millage, she encouraged the board to think about cutting stuff in other places. Mrs. Ross stated that Pike County they didn't fund their Recreation Department. The citizens funded the Department and the things the kids needed. She was a teacher in Pike County for 33 years and she knew all the parents and the kids and it's amazing to her that you had people going from one County to other because they had such a good school system. People wanted their children to go to Pike County schools and would lie about where they lived just to send their children there. Mrs. Ross stated that Pike County is a bedroom community and they don't have a lot of industry but they have made it just fine. Mrs. Ross said their taxes are lower than Lamar County's and raising property taxes is not the end all be all. Ms. Ross stated that they are on a budget and she can't just magically get money from somewhere. Mrs. Ross stated that she is against cutting the roads this day in time.

Melissa Kline of 420 Country Kitchen Road addressed the board and stated that her husband worked in Spalding County for the Sheriff's Office as the Assistant Jail Administrator and when they were doing their budget he would request fifteen computers and end up with five. Mrs. Kline stated that she had worked with Geraldine Pippin at the Tax Commissioner's office and the Board of Elections only had 1 person on staff which was Mrs. Bobbie Burnette. Mrs. Kline stated that to see they are raising the budget by \$35,000.00 for the Board of Elections in a year when we are not having a Presidential Election is a big chunk of money. In Emergency Management she wondered if the increase was going to go towards putting out more sirens because she can't hear it on County Kitchen Road. Chairman Glass stated they were getting two more sirens but eighty five percent of that is funded by State Grants. You don't see it because it is on the revenue side under Intergovernmental. Mrs. Kline said with the Recreation Department, she sees people all the time that are complaining about how much it cost for their kids to participate in recreation. The cost is \$75.00 to \$100.00 to play soccer or t-ball. Parents are paying all this money and you think that there would be some overlap. Chairman Glass stated that the fee is \$65.00 and if you have four or more children the fee is less. Chairman Glass stated that the fees are much higher in surrounding Counties. Besides the fees that are charged, The Recreation Department gets corporate sponsorship or grants to help offset the cost. The Recreation Department Budget is for salaries and the maintenance of fields. We are also building a new park on Hwy 36 and there are grants for this from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Mrs. Kline inquired about money going towards the playground equipment because she had heard people complaining about the playground equipment. Chairman Glass said that the County has an ongoing Maintenance Plan but he didn't know about any new equipment and he didn't know there were concerns about the current state of the equipment. As far as the Board of Elections is concerned, this year the only elections was for the Cities and they require one polling place. The City of Milner has no contested election.

The City of Barnesville usually has a contested seat for an election and that's one poll worker for one polling place. Next year there won't be a Presidential Preference Primary but there will be a Statewide Primary and there will probably be a run off on that. There will be a Governor's race with six or seven candidates so we will have two elections before July and then we have the November General Election and probably a run off for that. So we have four elections and six polling places with more poll workers and more machines. The County is also having to buy new machines. We still only have one full time employee and one part time employee. There has to be three weeks of early voting with three poll workers for every precinct.

Mr. Kingsley made a comment regarding this issue and said that early voting has gotten out of hand and requested for them to petition the legislatures to cut the early voting back to one week. Mr. Kingsley wanted to know in the case with the Education Special Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) this year, if all the precincts had to be open and inquired if the Cities paid the County. Chairman Glass responded to this with a yes and stated that since the County was mandated to hold the elections it was a fixed amount of \$3,000.00 paid to the County from each City.

Ashley Gilles of 425 Abbott Road inquired about the actual revenue for 2017 and wanted to know where the three percent was coming from. Ms. Gilles inquired about the State mandated resources and wanted to know if this is for State Mental Health or for Mental Health in Lamar County. County Administrator Zellner said that it was for Lamar County and Commissioner Thrash stated that it was tax payer funded. Ms. Gilles stated that she has an autistic child and had not been able to find any centers in Lamar County for autistic children and no available resources. Ms. Gilles said she had heard lots of complaints from many disgruntled parents. Commissioner Thrash asked if she was referring to children with Mental Health issues or children with Physical Disabilities because to her they are two separate issues. Ms. Gilles stated that she was referring to Mental Health. Chairman Glass stated that most of the services are provided through McIntosh Trail and there is also the Region 6 Behavioral Health and part of this is locally funded as well as State funded. Commissioner Traylor said that he serves on the Region 6 Behavioral Health Board and this is across the State and Counties across the State are trying to figure out ways to maximize the services. Ms. Gilles said that \$50.00 dollars is not a lot when it comes to the budget but she wanted to see what this \$50.00 is going to pay for. Ms. Gilles said that there are no services in the community for her daughter. Ms. Gilles said that it is really scary going in and out of some roads in the County and maybe she could deal with it if some of these roads were fixed. Mr. Gilles said that she has a whole year to budget \$50.00 and it won't kill her but she would like better communication for the public and she would like to see what the County is spending the money on. Financial Director Townsend stated that the 2017 projected revenue is \$1,716,493.00 but at the beginning of the year the decrease in the Spalding County inmate revenue decreased the revenues to \$1.5 million. Mr. Adams inquired about the actual amount the County received from Spalding County. Financial Director Townsend said that last year \$286, 000.00 was received and this year \$186,000.00 is projected. The County invoices for inmate housing but there are expenses to pay such as the jailors, the medical and hospital bills and meals. Chairman Glass addressed the mowing issues and said, "Last year we had three mowers that that kept up with the task and this year we are struggling to keep up with it because

of the rain. We have five mowers going and we have two extra employees but the mowers do take a lot of maintenance. We have increased our capacity by two thirds and we still can't keep up with it. Unless we contract it out, I don't know what else we can do. If there is an unsafe intersection, we try to get out and do some spot cutting. One of the things that we did was to not mow the right of ways but focus on the intersections only. We may to go back and prioritize right of ways." Ms. Gilles inquired about the Culture and Recreation, and wanted to know what we are we doing for the Culture. Chairman Glass stated that the Old Jail Museum and the Library is included. Ms. Gilles stated that under the Culture she knew that Shannon English runs the Old Jail Museum and knows that she is entitled to grants. Ms. Giles stated that there are 501(c) 3's out there and that she had looked it up and there are 81. There are 81 in Lamar County and to her that's a lot but she couldn't name 81 businesses. Chairman Glass said that the County focuses on the building and maintaining the archives. Mrs. English operates it out of her grant funding and she doesn't take a salary. The County tries to preserve the archives and preserve the history. There are some periodic repairs. Ms. Gilles said that she didn't understand why you try to keep the archives. Chairman Glass stated to preserve the history and Ms. Gilles stated that she didn't understand this. Ms. Gilles stated that she didn't see a lot of services for the community like the kids in Lamar County. Ms. Giles wanted to know what was done for the kids in Lamar County and asked if there was a park or a recreation. Commissioner Thrash asked Ms. Gilles if she thought that this was the tax payer's responsibility to provide places for the kids to go. Commissioner Thrash addressed Ms. Gilles and asked her what happens when she calls 911. Ms. Gilles replied that somebody comes. Commissioner Thrash said that the point that she was trying to make was that she was right, the Board of Commissioners need to prioritize but she didn't feel like that it's the tax payer's responsibility to provide a Recreation Department for kids to go play. Ms. Gilles wanted to know if there is a Parks and Receptions Director. Commissioner Thrash replied that the County does have one but that she was just trying to address her issue. Ms. Gilles wanted to know where the Parks and Receptions was located. County Administrator Zellner replied that it's located on Gordon Road. Chairman Glass explained to Ms. Gilles that the Recreation Department is County funded not City funded. Chairman Glass stated that it's located in the City limits but its tax payer funded. Like the Library, its County funded.

James Mann of 198 Silver Dollar Road addressed the board with his comments regarding the tax increase. He said that he is 74 years old and that somewhere along the line he feels like he deserves a break and he hasn't gotten it. He said that this was the first time he has been to a meeting in a long time. He thought the board was doing pretty good until he read some things in the paper and found out that the Sheriff's Office had quit taking prisoners from other Counties. Chairman Glass explained that we used to house prisoners from the City of Griffin but that the City of Griffin pulled them out and moved them to Spalding County. Mr. Mann said he remembered back when the late Sheriff Waller talked about how much money was made from housing inmates. Chairman Glass stated that it was over a million dollars a year. Mr. Mann said that it seemed to him that something went wrong somewhere. Mr. Mann wanted to know if this was the boards or the Sheriff's fault. Chairman Glass stated that the jail is very old and that another issue is transportation back and forth between places. It has gotten more expensive to transport prisoners. Ms. Kline requested to speak and said that the new Sheriff in Spalding County came from the City of Griffin. She stated that this was not Sheriff White's fault. Mr.

Mann stated that this is politics and politics affects all of us when we see what is going on in the world. Mr. Mann stated that he works part time at the Funeral Home and is retired from Ford Motor Company. He stated that he has heard that this whole County is nothing but senior citizens and if this is true then all the senior citizens are the ones paying all the money. Mr. Mann said he looked around in the meeting room and said that they are the ones with the pockets and they are the ones paying all the taxes. The people in the apartments aren't paying a dime. That hurts. The older he gets the more it hurts. That bothers him. Mr. Mann stated that he probably isn't going to live much longer and it's probably a good thing because by the time he dies or his children die his taxes are going to be so high that he feels sorry for them. People having children today and the way we are going our children won't make it. His grandchildren and great grandchildren won't make it either and the way this Country is today and the way we are struggling with gangs and everything else we are not going to make it. We are sitting up here arguing about property taxes and school taxes. Mr. Mann asked if he would have to pay school taxes if he went and lived in a rented house. Chairman Glass stated that property tax is incorporated within the rent of a tenant. Mr. Mann stated that he can't win and at 74 years old he has a lot of ideas but it's a little bit too late for him. Mr. Mann stated that people need to wake up because the seniors are footing the bill for everything and it's not the young people. Tax Assessor Haddock requested to speak to Mr. Mann. Tax Assessor Haddock said "Once you turn 65 in Lamar County you get an additional \$20,000.00 off the County portion of your tax bill if you come in apply for the exemption. We don't house birthdays so we don't know when you become 65 but the County is giving the citizens over 65 a break. On a \$100,000 home that saves you about \$250.00. The school gives an exemption but not as much as the County does. It comes off of the digest. The digest is the same for the County and the school but the County exemptions are more than the schools exemption. The Board of Commissioners do take care of the elderly. At 70 there are more exemptions. So, come see me." Mr. Mann stated that he didn't believe it. Tax Assessor Haddock stated that it's true. Mr. Mann said that he doesn't believe that this County takes care of any citizen. Tax Assessor Haddock encouraged Mr. Mann to come by her office. Mr. Mann stated that he was sorry but that they may think that they are but that they are not. Mrs. Mann stood up and said that they moved to Lamar County in 1990 and they know the tax system in this County and they probably should have went to another County because since they have been in the County since 1990 their taxes have increased over 100 percent since 1990. Mrs. Mann stated that they had not increased their house value and they have not bought anymore land and they are still sitting on 9 acres. Mrs. Mann stated that this is outrageous. Mrs. Mann stated that they moved to Lamar County and they sent their kids to school in the County and they raised their grandchildren in the County but now they are 75 years old and are paying \$1,200.00 on property taxes and you want to give us \$200.00 a year. Tax Assessor Haddock interjected and said that of that mill rate part of that is the school system. Tax Assessor Haddock told Mrs. Mann to look at her tax bill and stated that the County mill rate has gone up maybe 2 mills since 2010 and in 2013. Tax Assessor Haddock said that when houses were being foreclosed on and people were paying \$40,000.00 they were taxed on that \$40,000.00 but you were still taxed on your fair market value and that hurt. That hurt the County. That hurt the digest. Mr. Mann stated that he went through the County and saw a decrease in houses being built. Mr. Mann said that he has seen so many different things change in this County and for him the County insurance has

changed. Mr. Mann stated that he retired from Ford Motor Company and this County doesn't allow Kiser Permanente. Chairman Glass stated that this something that the County is not responsible for and Mr. Mann told him not to say that it wasn't the County because he has argued with Medicare. Butts County and other counties have Kiser Permanente but in this County you can't. Chairman Glass stated that there isn't a policy with the County that states you can't have Kiser Permanente. Mr. Mann said that he knew that but there has to be something or some reason why Kiser Permanente will not allow a person to have their insurance in this County. Commissioner Traylor stated that there are no providers locally that accept Kiser Permanente. Mr. Mann stated that when he drove from Ford Motor Company he saw the building and he could have it then but now he can't have it. Mr. Mann stated that there are the things that fall on senior citizens and he doesn't understand it and he hasn't got time to get into all of the County stuff. Mr. Mann stated that every time he turns around there is something else. He said he wanted to know why he couldn't see just a little bit of help and not have to wait until he is 75 years old. They want to give me a break at 70 years old but he needed a break at 50. Mr. Mann stated that he noticed that in the paper the County is no longer taking prisoners and making money from the other counties. Mr. Mann said that this is kind of stupid. Mr. Mann stated that if this was our fault that this would be kind of stupid. Mr. Mann said he had a great job and he is blessed. He retired from a great company and he has a good pension and he makes more money now than when he worked but it's the different things that are happening to senior citizens of this world and nobody pays any attention. Mr. Mann stated again that he had not been to a meeting in 26 years to see what actually goes on and he realized that was his fault. Chairman Glass requested Mrs. Mann's first name for the record and she stated it was Kathey Mann. Mrs. Mann said that she comes out of Silver Dollar Road and that the grass gets so high and they only cut it before Buggy Days. It's embarrassing to drive down the highway and to come through Spalding and Pike and their grass in the median is cut and Lamar County's is four foot high. She called the Road Department and was told that the State maintains this and wanted to know why we are paying taxes for something that the State is not doing. Mrs. Mann said that they told her that the mowing was done by the State and it was not the County. Chairman Glass stated that Hwy 41 and Hwy 18 are State roads and not the County. The County does not maintain those roads, the state does. The County can't enforce the state to cut the grass. Chairman Glass stated that he could badger them but he has no authority to make them do something. Mr. Mann stated that you would think that a County that has a four lane running right through the middle of it would be kept in some kind of good shape. It's not that hard to cut grass. Mr. Mann stated that he cuts grass constantly. Mrs. Mann wanted to know if the Public Works Department was responsible for cutting the grass. Chairman Glass stated that they are for County Roads but not the State roads. All State roads are managed by the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT). Mrs. Mann said that this is dumb.

Penny Jenkins 170 Peacock Road addressed the board and said that Commissioner Heiney mentioned going to the budget hearings which she did six or seven years ago along with her pastor, her mother and herself. She said that they looked at them like they came in on a spaceship. It was an interesting four or five days but they were kind of treated like they shouldn't have shown up and why they were even there. Ms. Peacock said that it is their responsibility as a community and as a citizen. We are the people, we need to be there. The board is doing their job

but the citizens are the ones who have to hold them accountable. Let's cut where we can cut and let's look at this need to be able to discuss it. This is the citizen's responsibility. Chairman Glass stated that he couldn't answer for seven years ago but during his reign anytime someone comes to the meetings they recognize them and let them speak if they want to.

Johnny Copeland 171 Boyt Road addressed the board and stated that he had lived in Lamar County for 41 years and he knew that the board had a hard job. Mr. Copeland stated that he sees 11 percent increase on the Emergency Management Agency and inquired if this was the fenced in lot by the old soccer fields. Chairman Glass stated that this was part of it. Mr. Copeland stated that this had not been touched since he had been working for the City and the only time he had seen anyone inside the gate was when he went over there to attach power in there. This was three and a half years ago. Mr. Copeland asked where this money was going and if he said that if the County is getting new sirens then that is fine. There is a siren at Ingles, one at the Recreation Department, and there is one behind Badcock so, if they are putting some more in then he is all for it. Mr. Copeland said that he cuts his grass every eight days and he still can't keep up and the men in the City can't stay caught up. You cut the grass and then it rains. Mr. Copeland inquired about Public Safety and said he felt like the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Office deserve it and he has no problem with that but if it's a \$50.00 increase today what is it going to be next year and the year after that. Mr. Copeland said that he was almost grown when the Mann's moved to Lamar County so he is hoping to make it to their age. Mr. Copeland wanted to know what the tax rate is going to be when he turns 74. Mr. Copeland said that Tax Assessor Haddock has helped him as much as she could. He said he has conservation on his property and he is not griping about what he pays. Mr. Copeland said he sees a lot of brand new vehicles and then maybe two years old vehicles that get brand new sets of mud grip tires. Mr. Copeland works for the City of Barnesville and stated that the truck he uses is a whole different ball game. Mr. Copeland stated that his truck is 17 years old and he works 12 thousand volts out of that truck every day. Mr. Copeland said that they take care of their stuff at the City of Barnesville so that they can have 20 year old trucks. Mr. Copeland said that he doesn't have a problem with new trucks but he wants to see them taken care of. Mr. Copeland said that he doesn't like to see cigarettes hanging out the window of a County truck. Mr. Copeland says he sees Deputies standing in the school parking lot smoking cigarettes. He see Deputies going through the car rider line with a cigarette in their hand letting a kid out. That is a law too. No smoking with a child in the car under 17. Mr. Copeland said that he doesn't expect the board to break everything down by the penny but said that the roads need to be fixed so don't take away from the equipment. If you need to pay the men, pay them a little bit more. Mr. Copeland said that he heard in the morning Public Hearing meeting that we lose Deputies after we train them. Mr. Copeland wanted to know if the County holds them to a contract like other agencies. Other agencies that pay for your school will mandate you to stay there until they recoup their money. Mr. Copeland said that the mandate ten years ago was about \$3,500.00 but he also understands they don't make as much as they could somewhere else. Mr. Copeland said that he used to work at Ford Motor Company with Mr. Mann and he has ridden all he wants to ride. Mr. Copeland stated that he took a hefty pay cut to stay here in Lamar County. If they want to leave, sign a contract and get your money back. Mr. Copeland said that he is probably going to piss everybody off but he doesn't have a problem with the Sheriff writing tickets. If you are going to break the law you are going to get in trouble.

There is stuff that goes on in Atlanta and Detroit that doesn't happen in Lamar County. We don't have police beatings and shootings and all that. If you don't speed you don't get a ticket. If you don't break the law you don't get in trouble. You speed go pay the fine. They say Milner is a speed trap but if you don't speed you don't get a ticket. Mr. Copeland says he has a lot of friends in law enforcement and a license reader will bring in over a million dollars in revenue in one year on one car. Mr. Copeland said he wasn't griping because he is proud to live here and it cost money to live in this Country, in this State and in this County. We don't live for free. Everyone who owns a piece of property in this town doesn't live for free. But some folks do and that's a whole other topic for another day. Mr. Copeland says that he doesn't mind to pay to live here but he wants to see that the money is going to something worthwhile and not being squandered. Mr. Copeland says that he knows that Fire Chief Matthews asked for some more people and he has no problem with this. If his \$50.00 and everybody else's \$50.00 goes to hiring three more Fire Fighters they might get to my house before my baby died and he has no problem with that. Everything that is man-made is designed to fail. The trucks are going to break down, the mowers are going to break down. Chairman Glass stated that he would pass along Mr. Copeland's concerns regarding the smoking issues with Sheriff White.

Julia Heidbrink of 588 Hwy 36 West Barnesville addressed the board and stated that she moved here in 1994 in a little bitty single wide and put a new roof on it that cost \$1,500.00. It was worth more than the whole house. Since 1998, she has lived in a manufactured home, it's not a house but she said her taxes have gone up and she has had to make cuts and if she didn't do something to raise extra income along with her \$635.00 of Social Security there would be no money. Mrs. Heidbrink stated that her husband Karl has a nice retirement from IBM, he was in financial planning, so that is why he is asking the board a lot of financial questions. He also gets some Social Security money but, we don't have two nickels to rub together. Our payments have gone up this year. The tax increase will cause our payment to go up again. She said that they live on 30 acres of woods in a manufactured home and they wouldn't even be able to sell their house for what it is going to require to maintain it. Mrs. Heidbrink stated that she agrees with Commissioner Thrash and when her kid was coming up and he wanted to go swimming and play games and stuff it came out of her pocket and her little job because she had to support whatever he needed. She had to run him back and forth to get stuff. Ms. Heidbrink stated that her kid was frugal and he wasn't in to a lot of stuff but if he wanted to it would have been her to have to pay for it. Mrs. Heidbrink said that it is good to have a Senior Center and all these services and transportation for people to get back and forth to work but when her car was broke, she had to find a way to work. Mrs. Heidbrink said that she lived in Brunswick and Saint Simmons Island in her early twenties and when she was working and she had a Morris Minor car. She said that back then you would put fifty cents of gasoline in it and fill it up with oil. She had to be responsible getting back and forth to work. Mrs. Heidbrink said that she is 72 years old and she has worked since she is 16 years old. Some people make a lot of money and some people make a little bit of money and you budget for what you make. When the money runs out you just stop. There is nowhere for her to get more income and there is nowhere for Karl to get more income. He is 78 years old and he has to make it another 10 years so that she can afford to live in case something happens to him. There is no extra money at this point so if you have to cut some services cut out those that some of these young folks think are essential. Ms. Heidbrink went on

to say that if the kid wants to play soccer, then say okay mom, she had to do it when her kid was coming along. This world isn't any better for the younger folks just because the County is doing what we had to do. Ms. Heidbrink closed by saying that she appreciated what the board has to go through and what they have to do and you sit up there and listen to everybody fuss at you when things like this come up but you need to think about it.

Richard Adams spoke again and asked how much money was needed and if there was anything available to cut. Chairman Glass stated that the budget proposed is \$9,796,976. Mr. Adams asked how much is going to be gained. Chairman Glass responded and said with the 1 mill increase will generate \$452,000.00. Mr. Adams asked if there was \$452,000.00 to cut and if the board looked at this for 15 hours is there \$452,000.00 to cut. Chairman Glass said that there was.

Mr. Copeland said that at this point this is a done deal and requested that the board exhaust all efforts and if it is going to go for something tangible then he is all for it. Mr. Copeland said that his mother hauled him around or he rode his bicycle. He rode from Silver Dollar Road into town. Mr. Copeland said he would never let his daughter do that because it's a different time. Mr. Copeland said his daddy hauled him and Commissioner Traylor around, he grew up with Commissioner Traylor, or they walked. If there is anything that can be shaved, he asked that they look at it before they make up their minds. Mr. Copeland said he is not on a fixed income but he will be at some point in time and in the next twenty years wondered what is going to happen. Mr. Copeland said that he is one that probably will not be able to retire. Mr. Copeland said if the \$452,000.00 is going to put three sirens up then that is fine but, if it is not then that is not fine. Mr. Copeland said that he sees a lot of wasted space besides the old Barnesville Academy building and he might be wrong but he doesn't see where that money is going. Is that stuff just sitting over there? In the event of an Emergency none of it will probably even crank because it has not been moved or touched. Chairman Glass stated that it has been maintained. Mr. Copeland said that he stood corrected and asked that the board exhaust all efforts before they make up their minds. Mr. Copeland asked what could be shaved off and dropped. Mr. Copeland said that someone may have to decide whether they get their meds for a month or they pay their property taxes and he asked the board to look at it again. Commissioner Traylor said that he appreciated the citizens who came out to learn more about it and he definitely encouraged them to come out to all the meetings because the board takes a lot of time working with all of the Departments. Commissioner Traylor said that he assured them that none of the board members are sitting up there not thinking about it. Commissioner Traylor said that he was on his vacation and sitting beside a pool looking at the budget trying to figure out what to do. Commissioner Traylor says he pays quite a bit of taxes and the last thing he wants to do is to pay more taxes. Commissioner Traylor said that the board has looked at it and they will continue to look at it. This is the point where we have to bring it to the public and we have to continue the process but we are still carving on it and trying to figure out how to cut away. Commissioner Traylor said that they will continue to work on it. The goal is to get it down lower but it started out a lot higher than where it is now. We were able to whittle it down and get it down to this point. There has been a lot of work put into it and a lot more than 15 hours.

Ashley Gilles inquired about a Facebook page or something that is not leaving everyone in the dark so that everyone in the County is informed. Ms. Gilles stated that even though the grass isn't being cut over here, it would let everyone know that you guys are actually repairing roads over here that way everybody is not in the dark since you have the whole County to take care of. Maybe this would cut back on some of the opposition if you really do this increase. It will let people know what is really going on to keep people informed that way they don't feel like they are in the dark so much.

Johnny Copeland said that it would be better to be proactive even though it will cost someone several hours to do something. Some kind of Social Media so that you won't get berated. People are only going to see the negative, they aren't going to see the positive. Mr. Copeland said that no one ever sees the good at the County, City, Police or Fire unless it's your house burning or your grass that is being cut or your trash being picked up. That is the only time they see the good. Mr. Copeland said that it might be good to be proactive.

Ashley Gilles stated that most people don't read the newspaper. The new generation is starting to get involved so maybe Social Media would be a positive.

Mrs. Kline stated that she did go on Facebook and put it out there that on a \$150,000.00 home it would be only about \$40.00 if you raise the taxes. Mrs. Kline said that she tried to make some people feel better so that is one thing that can be both positive and negative. The number made her feel better. Chairman Glass thanked everyone for their input and there were some good ideas and they would take it all under advisement. The next meeting will be August 15th at 6:00 p.m. at the Courthouse. The Regular Business meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. but will begin after the Public Hearing. The Resolutions for the millage rate will be voted on at the Regular Business meeting. If you want to speak to us before then, the contact information for the Board of Commissioners is on the County website. This input is what we need. County Clerk Davidson stated that on the front page of the Lamar County website there is a News Ticker with information that is always running with information regarding the tax increase and the handouts from tonight are on the website as well. The website is lamarcountyga.com.

Adjournment

Commissioner Heiney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. and Commissioner Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Bennie Horton, Vice-Chairman

Robert Heiney, Commissioner

Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk