

Lamar County Board of Commissioners
Public Hearing
August 13th
6:00 P.M.

Chairman Glass called the Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Traylor, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Heiney, Commissioner Thrash, County Administrator Townsend and County Clerk Davidson.

Chairman Glass stated that the 2019 Tax Digest shows a rollback of 12.406 mills. This generates the same dollars as last year. This year the board is proposing a 13.157 which is a $\frac{3}{4}$ mill increase or a 6 percent increase.

Jim Granum of 864 Thomaston Street addressed the board and stated he was in support of the tax increase. He said that he is proud of this City and County. Mr. Granum said that he understood that there are conflicts with spending and raising money. He said that people who visit love Barnesville. Mr. Granum said that the schools and industry are doing well and that good people are running the City and the County. He concluded by thanking the board for the job they are doing

Nancy Anderson of 236 Harrel Circle, Barnesville, Georgia inquired about the millage rate of surrounding counties. Chairman Glass stated that the current millage rate for Pike County is 14.261; Upson County is 16.333; Butts County is 13.209; Monroe is 13.331; Spalding County is 20.145. Chairman Glass stated that Spalding County has a Fire District which makes theirs higher. Lamar County would still have the lowest millage rate with the 13.157.

Randy Vining of P.O. Box 191 Milner, Ga addressed the board and in reviewing the increases and decreases in each section said that he noticed that the Board of Elections has a 122 percent overall increase. Commissioner Thrash responded that this was due to the upcoming elections. City. Mr. Vining said he was good with the increase as long as he understands where the money is going. He said that the roads are torn up from the logging trucks and they need to be fixed.

Chairman Glass explained that several areas would be increased. There would be an overall health care increase of 10.4 percent. Chairman Glass said that there is an issue with hiring and keeping employees and when getting people to fill the empty positions they have to raise salaries. The Superior Court Circuit budget includes Butts and Monroe County and is based on case load. He said that Lamar County's portion is increasing but Butts and Monroe County's portion went down. Chairman Glass also explained that there would be facility and maintenance repairs. He said that air condition units are having to be replaced and they cost anywhere from \$5,000.00 to \$6,000.00 apiece. Chairman Glass said that he estimated the overall difference to be \$308,000.00 and the millage rate increase would generate around \$245,000.00. This is about 80 percent of the difference. The other 20 percent will be covered with cost cutting.

Commissioner Thrash inquired about the cost for paving. County Administrator Townsend replied that it cost \$125,000.00 per mile. He said that it cost \$600,000.00 to \$700,000.00 to resurface a road when you build a base.

Bobby Brantley of 216 Liberty Hill Street, Milner, Georgia addressed the board and said that there were major issues with Silver Dollar Road. He said that when he was 16 years old, he

helped pave that road and they had water coming out of the road so they put the road in so people could have a place to water the horses.

Chairman Glass said that they recently re-paved .9 miles on Industrial Road. He said that they knew there was a lot of trucks going in and out of Jordan Lumber so they did a deep reclamation and the base and they put in stacking lanes for trucks that are waiting to load and unload. He said this was a 1.6 million-dollar project for less than a mile. He said that it has a twenty-year life span. Chairman Glass explained that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) helped with the specs in the bid and that the County also received money from the State. He said that they used the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) and other supplemental money that was received from the Commissioner of the GDOT plus the County's match. He said that they received an extra \$300,000.00 from them. He said that it is the best road in the County. Chairman Glass explained that there are 360 miles of paved roads in the County.

Mr. Vining inquired about the increase in Risk Management. County Clerk Davidson responded that this is liability insurance. County Administrator Townsend explained that the increase in liability insurance was due to new trucks and equipment, which were purchased out of the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) fund, along with the new Lamar County Health Department building. County Administrator Townsend reported that the County received a \$26,000.00 grant from the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) for safety enhancements.

Rudy Jefferson of Thomaston, Georgia addressed the board and stated that the board had done a good job with paving roads in Lamar County. He said that the handout shows that there is a 1.73 percent decrease in the overall expenditures so he didn't understand why the millage rate would need to be increased. County Administrator Townsend explained that the debt service was paid off last year and this year the County doesn't have that. He said that the expenditures are lower because \$452,000.00 worth of debt service was paid off. Chairman Glass said that it may not be fair to include the \$452,000.00 in the total budget for the fiscal year 2018 in comparison to 2019 because it was a one-time thing. Mr. Jefferson again asked where the money was going for the tax increase. Chairman Glass said that there was \$308,000.00 allocated for the increase in health care cost, salary adjustments, Superior Court increase in cost, and a lot of facility repairs.

Mr. Vining inquired about a 30 percent increase in the Tax Assessors line item. County Administrator Townsend explained that it was actually for contracts for Lamar County's qPublic and the re-assessments on property. The values dropped below 40 percent so re-evaluations had to be done on the properties with the State to make sure that the sales ratio was proper. Tax Assessor Haddock explained that re-evaluations had not been done since 2001. The contract for this service is \$56,000 per year. County Administrator Townsend said that last year excess SPLOST funds were transferred into the General Fund because all of the projects were completed. The rest was left for the rollback and this is where some of the funding for Industrial Drive and the new Lamar County Health Department came from. County Administrator Townsend said that there were a lot of things that came in last year that makes it look higher. He said that in fiscal year 2018 there was a million dollars moved into the General Fund from SPLOST II and this was the reason for the extra money.

Mr. Brantley asked if the County would be selling any property or equipment. Mr. Brantley asked if they would be buying any property or equipment. Chairman Glass stated that there were no

property transactions scheduled for this year. Chairman Glass said that the Sheriff's Office is requesting more vehicles.

Mr. Vining inquired about the Recreation budget increase of 19 percent. County Administrator Townsend explained that the Town of Aldora used to provide a \$25,000.00 grant to the Recreation Department to help the kids to play sports. The Recreation Department requested that the board give them these funds since the Town of Aldora was no longer providing this grant. Chairman Glass stated that the \$25,000.00 is going straight to the operating fund and stated that the Recreation Department is considered a County Service.

Chairman Glass explained that the Town of Aldora gets sales tax. One penny for every seven cents collected comes back to the County and is split between the three Cities in the County. The Town of Aldora gets one percent, the City of Milner gets 4 percent and the City of Barnesville gets 34 percent and Lamar County gets the remaining percentage. The municipalities also receive a property insurance rebate that is used for Fire Service.

Jackie Hardaway of 300 McCollum Road addressed the board and said he never has complained before. He said that he is a truck driver and hasn't had the time to come to the meetings. He stated that for the last 19 years he has paid his taxes without complaining. He said that the taxes increase and he sees less work on his side of the road. He said that there has been no paving and no lines put on his road. He said as people are moving in the neighborhood there is more traffic and they don't know how to drive on county roads or which side of the road they are supposed to be on. Mr. Hardaway requested that they pave and stripe his road because it is needed. He said that for 19 years McCollum Road is always on the list but he hasn't even seen a stripe or line being painted on his road. He said that he can go a half a mile up and they are resurfacing the same portion of the road. He said that his portion of McCollum Road is dangerous and they need to put a rush on it because time is short for him.

Mr. Brantly asked if the County receives any money from the Government on a State, Federal or International level. Chairman Glass responded that the County had recently received a \$750,000.00 Grant from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to build the new Lamar County Health Department. The County receives LMIG money, which is part of the fuel taxes collected by the State, to help pave the roads. Chairman Glass reported that 10 to 15 percent of those collections have to be given back to the local governments. Lamar County receives around \$380,000.00 a year. Chairman Glass said that the County also receives Safety Improvement Grant money for painting lines and for signage. Mr. Brantley inquired about the Public Works budget and County Administrator Townsend stated that they had no increase or decreases and they actually came in under budget. He said that some of that was attributed to employee turnover and a decrease in salaries.

Mr. Vining inquired about the spending of SPLOST funds. Chairman Glass replied that the County receives SPLOST money and it is a six-year program. The current SPLOST known as SPLOST III started in November of 2017 and SPLOST II ran from 2011 to 2017. Once the designated projects are completed, then according to State law the excess funds can be used to first pay off debt service and then used to supplement the budget and effectively rollback the millage rate. Mr. Vining stated that he was for sales tax money because it gets everyone involved. Commissioner Thrash said that they have to continue to draw more people and industries into the County and using SPLOST funds for the Industrial Road paving was a good investment.

Tax Assessor Haddock reported that they are finished with the re-evaluations for the City of Barnesville and there were no appeals. She said that the assessments are on going and that property and land values are up. The tax digest is based on assessments as of January 1st and that the decreases will come out of that.

Commissioner Thrash explained that the board holds budget workshops every year before they approve the budget. They are held during the day and that the public is invited. Chairman Glass said that they meet with each Department Head and the Constitutional Officers. They look at the line items that have big changes or line items that need improvement. Chairman Glass said that the budget is available to the public and they can see all of the line items for each Department or Constitutional Officer regarding whether or not a line item has increased or decreased.

Chairman Glass explained that the Board of Elections budget is going up because Georgia is required to purchase new machines. He said that the legislators approved 150 million to purchase new voting machines along with training. The State has approved a contractor and is going to pay for this but the County will be responsible for paying for the ink and the paper that is used to print out the ballots. The State is paying for the equipment but the County will have to pay for the maintenance contract after a period of two years. He said that the increase in the Election budget is based on the number of elections. Even numbered years are election years and odd number years are only for special elections and municipal elections. Chairman Glass reported that there would be a Presidential preference primary in March and then the Primary Election in May with a possible runoff in July. The General Election is in November and sometimes there is a runoff for the General Election in December. This means there is a potential for five elections next year. All of these are County wide so they have to maintain six polling places. The City election will require one polling place. Early voting is held for a period of three weeks for each of these five elections. They have to account for absentee ballots and the labor involved in the mail outs.

There being no more comments Chairman Glass requested that they adjourn the Public Hearing. Commissioner Thrash made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing at 6:35 p.m. and Vice-Chairman Traylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charles Glass, Chairman

Ryran Traylor, Vice-Chairman

Bennie Horton, Commissioner

Robert Heiney, Commissioner

Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk