

PUBLIC HEARING

The Spalding County Board of Commissioners held A Public Hearing in Room 108 in the Courthouse Annex, Wednesday, July 22, 2009, beginning at 5:00 o'clock p.m. with Commission Chairman Edward Goss, Jr. presiding and Commissioners Eddie L. Freeman and Bob Gilreath present. Absent was Commissioner Gwen Flowers-Taylor and David Phillips. Also present were County Manager William P. Wilson, Jr., Assistant to the County Manager Paul Van Haute and Teresa Watson to record minutes.

I. OPENING (CALL TO ORDER)

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Conduct Public Hearing to receive comment on the notice of proposed property tax increase.

Mr. Wilson advised Spalding County was in the process of setting the millage rate, including the proper advertisements. The projected increase is 1 mill in General Fund (\$38 on a \$100,000 home) and a .2 mill increase in Fire District for staffing and operations of the L.B. Norton Fire Station (\$7.60 on \$100,000) so there would be a total \$45.60 increase from last year on a \$100,000 home. In the cities of Orchard Hill, Sunny Side and Griffin, this would amount to a \$38 increase. There will be a hearing today at 5 p.m. as well, and one on July 28 at 6 p.m.

John Devlin, 509 S. Walkers Mill Road, Griffin, Georgia

In this depressing economic climate, there are many tea parties and other grassroots efforts for tax revolt and this includes Spalding County. In previous years, property value reassessments gave a tax increase and now there looms another. The amount of \$45 does not sound like much, but on a fixed income it is problematic. The paper this morning cited one reason for the tax increase was to refrain from laying off County employees, but he noted the private sector has had to deal with this for a great long while. Jobs can still be found although they are harder to come by. If layoffs, furloughs or cutbacks are necessary, then so be it, but this tax increase is not acceptable. He urged commissioners to please reconsider.

Bart Miller, 3259 Williamson Road, Griffin, Georgia

He realized this increase was more or less a done deal, but he felt foreclosures and appeals will increase. He thanked Commissioners Goss and Flowers-Taylor for their stance against the tax increase. Many are on fixed incomes and with the state increase because of not funding the homeowners tax relief grant, this additional amount will certainly pose a greater hardship for many.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Freeman and Gilreath carried at 11:08 a.m.

Chairman

County Clerk

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Robert Lattimore, 2847 Teamon Road, Griffin, Georgia

Mr. Lattimore advised he was retired and had a hard time seeing how taxes continued to go up when the value of everything is actually going down. He felt many things could be cut to avoid an increase in taxes, such as cutting back on the time the recycling centers are open. He urged commissioners to cut spending and look at other sources of revenue.

John Devlin, 509 S. Walkers Mill Road, Griffin, Georgia

Mr. Devlin spoke again this afternoon, asking to whom the Commissioners felt they owed their allegiance ... to employees or to taxpayers. This concerned his comments made at the public hearing earlier today. He reiterated again that if layoffs, furloughs or cutbacks are necessary, then so be it, but this tax increase is not acceptable. He urged commissioners to please reconsider.

John Handley, 54 Handley Road, Griffin, Georgia

The people experiencing this tax increase are the same ones who have lost jobs and may be put in the position of losing homes if costs keep inflating. Perhaps an additional increase in sales tax could help not put the burden on the taxpayer. He also sees Sheriff cars in people's yards all over the County, as well as City police and City trucks in people's yards and often the big trucks hauling only one person. We keep adding jobs and vehicles and placing more of a financial burden on the taxpayer. Officials are hurting the people they should be concerned with protecting. As a previous employee of Springs, he knows that industry can be gone and leave behind devastating effects.

Jane Westmoreland, 105 Four Oaks Drive, Griffin, Georgia

She asked what was going on with the revaluation effort and appraisals. The process is ongoing, said Chairman Goss, and should complete over the next few months. There has not been a revaluation in a great many years, and it's hard to say what the results will be. Mr. Wilson advised that state law requires 1/3 of the property is done each year in an effort to keep appraisals current, but that process does not always meet with success. A true revaluation has not been done in Spalding County within the past 40 years. During that time, not only is there much inequality but a great many properties and/or improvements that have not been permitted. There is an update on the Spalding County website that provides the status of the current reval effort. Appraisals are valued on the properties' use.

Harry Darden, 120 Henry Jackson Road, Griffin, Georgia

He wondered how much money would be spent on airport studies that he felt were unnecessary. He also felt the recycling centers did not need to be open seven days a week.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor felt this process of allowing public comment after the budget is approved is a rather convoluted exercise. Perhaps this input should have been received and been more helpful during the budget process. At this point, it is an exercise in futility in her opinion, but she understood the logic of the requirement.

Mr. Wilson said the fiscal year ends June 30, the digest is set in July with the appropriate millage rate, and bills are sent out with a due date of November 15. The dates are set according to state law, and these three public hearings for setting of the tax levy are only necessary because of the increased millage rate.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Freeman and Gilreath, to adjourn at 5:26 p.m.

Chairman

County Clerk

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