

**GATES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 12, 2015**

The Gates County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session at 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, 2015 in the Main Court Room, 202 Court Street, Gatesville. Commissioners Hofler, Owens, Jordan, Felton and Freeman were present. Also present was County Manager, Natalie Rountree and Finance Director, Sandy Pittman.

Commissioner Hofler led in prayer and the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Hofler called the meeting to order.

The Board reviewed the expected tax revenues and the requests of the tax department. Ms. Rountree informed the Board that the tax office is willing to contribute funds out of their department to help with changing vendors for the GIS system. Commissioner Owens stated he would be in favor of charging each department that utilizes GIS set amounts based on their amount of usage to cover costs.

Ms. Pittman reminded the Board the finance and administration departments have been merged and the customer service department has been split into its own department.

Ms. Rountree stated legislation is proposing an additional presidential primary, therefore there is an increase in funds allocated to the Board of Elections to cover the costs. Based on conversations being held with the Republican Party there will be two new Board members coming onto the Board of Elections in August and they will be required to attend conferences to become certified. Ms. Rountree has recommended leaving the budget for the Board of Elections as is until information is confirmed about republican appointments and the presidential primary. The Board agreed with leaving the budget for the Board of Elections as presented.

The Board discussed the Register of Deeds budget and budget request. Ms. Horton has requested a salary increase based on completion of her certification. Commissioner Jordan asked about merit increases. Ms. Pittman stated last year employees were given a 1% cost of living increase and the year before increases were only given based on reorganization and classification study.

The Board reviewed the budget for building and grounds and discussed how fleet vehicles and departmental vehicles are budgeted. The Board discussed lawn services and improvements to the lawn at the library. Ms. Rountree shared some possible quotes for preparing the soil for seeding. Commissioner Owens asked for research to be conducted to secure prices on professional seeding and turf.

The Board reviewed the budget for the Sheriff's Office, Ms. Rountree explained raises were requested but not budgeted for the Sheriff's department. There were some requested things such as painting and carpet cleaning that can be taken care of this year with funds in the current budget. The budgeted money for K-9 expenses has been eliminated. Animal Control was greatly reduced based on what has been spent during the current fiscal year, it has been recommended the office make purchases this year out of the animal control budget for necessary items that may not be covered in the proposed budget. The office computer and video equipment line item was requested to be \$30,000 and has been reduced to \$15,000 because money has been set aside in capital funds and there are grants available for law enforcement computers.

The Board reviewed the budget for emergency services, the biggest change is in office supplies because we have found out that office supplies can't be purchased with 911 funds.

The Board reviewed the budget for the inspections office, the salary line is higher because an additional full time inspector was hired a few months ago. The part time salary monies were left in to cover the contracted level III inspector.

The medical examiner and rescue squad has been left the same as this fiscal year. The animal shelter requested less funds this year but it is likely that this fiscal year or next they will ask for additional funding for some work they would like completed, an RFP should be going out soon. The GITS budget is made mostly of grants and the majority of non-grant funding is tied as matching funds to grants. Commissioner Hofler asked about the travel allocations, Ms. Rountree verified that all travel expenses are justified and required for the GITS Director.

The Board reviewed the forestry budget.

The Board reviewed the planning budget, the professional expenses line item is listed as discussed for the GIS services. The vehicle expense line was included because a fleet vehicle will go directly to the department starting July 1.

The Board reviewed the programs under Cooperative Extension that are grant funded, Ms. Rountree informed the Board nothing is changing with their grants. Ms. Rountree stated the proposed budget does cut one of the secretary positions. Unfortunately we couldn't find funding to cover the position, we are not the only county that is having to cut a position. Next July the County will be required to pay 50% of all salaries in Cooperative Extension. Commissioner Jordan asked if these changes would be effective July 1 and if there are other positions in the County that may be available for the employee to transfer. Ms. Rountree said she is not aware of anywhere else the employee can be placed. Commissioner Jordan requested the manager look at the cost of the severance package vs keeping the employee. Ms. Rountree said it is an issue of being able to sustain the funds for following years and it is hard to justify two secretaries for an office the size of our Cooperative Extension Office.

The Board reviewed all special appropriations. Gates Partners for Health is remaining the same as this year. Commissioner Jordan presented a letter from the Gates County Housing Committee requesting funds again this year. Commissioner Jordan explained the work the committee is responsible for and the projects accomplished this year. Ms. Rountree asked what other funding the committee receives. Commissioner Jordan stated the Committee receives URP grant funds, some other grant funding, church donations and donations from Farm Bureau. Commissioner Felton and Freeman feel that the organization is worthwhile and doing good work and should be added to the priority list but it doesn't appear that we have the extra funding without cutting departments that have already had a cut. Chairman Hofler would like to see us find some money for the Committee but it's not likely that we can fund the entire request. Ms. Rountree explained the funding for Albemarle Food Bank, Hopeline, RC&D, Chamber of Commerce and Beaver Lake noting that the Chamber and Beaver Lake were both taking cuts to funding. Commissioner Owens and Commissioner Freeman agreed with the appropriations including the decrease in funding for the Chamber of Commerce and Beaver Lake.

The Board reviewed the budget for Soil and Water and the salary increase for certifications earned and paying of dues.

The Board reviewed the budget for Social Services, the minor home repairs grant for \$10,000 is not included because we did not use the grant for two years. Ms. Rountree asked how many external agencies or individuals have office space that are not county employees. Commissioner Felton wasn't sure. Ms. Rountree mentioned the office for Mr. Couch and the office that Northeast Workforce Development uses is occupied without the county receiving any payment.

The Board reviewed the funding for schools, Ms. Rountree has spoken with Dr. Williams and explained why she recommended the budget be left flat. Ms. Rountree updated the Board on some additional funding that Central Middle School may be eligible to receive and if they are awarded money then the County may need to help with some remaining funds. The Board reviewed the capital outlay requests from the School Board.

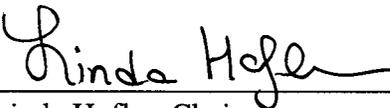
Funding for the library and the community college has remained flat. Commissioner Owens would consider trimming a little off of the community college budget if we really needed the money to cover a deficit in another area. The Board reviewed the budget for the Community Center and agreed to keep it flat.

The Board reviewed water & sewer funds. There was discussion on certifications being received by an employee to become the backup operator for sewer since Joe Harrell has removed himself as backup. The Board discussed the possibility of reciprocity agreements with other counties to share staff or contract services if there is not an internal backup.

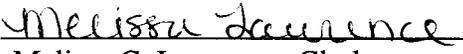
Commissioner Owens stated he would like to recommend an increase for the Chairman of the Board based on the amount of trips and time the Chairman is required to put in. This year may not be the best year since we can't fund other employees but when we do have extra funds he would like to have this considered.

Adjournment

Commissioner Owens made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Felton seconded the motion; motion passed without opposition.



Linda Hofler, Chairman



Melissa C. Lawrence, Clerk

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