

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for a Public Hearing on Monday, August 8, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. at the Brooks County Administration Building in the Commissioners Meeting Room, located at 610 South Highland Road; Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Ms. Myra Exum; and Mr. Lee Larko. Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman and Mr. Willie Cody were not present. Others present were: Ms. Jessica J. McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams; County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels; Human Resources; and various residents.

Public Hearing – Vice Chairman called public hearing to order. Mr. Jack Harrell led all in attendance in prayer and the pledge of allegiance.

The purpose of the hearing was to allow citizen input on the tentative adopted millage rate which will require an increase in property taxes by 14.56 percent for the unincorporated area and 18.40 percent for the incorporated area. The tentative increase will result in a millage rate of 14.153 mills; an increase of 1.799 mill for unincorporated area; and 16.107 mills, an increase of 2.503 mill for incorporated area. A sign-in sheet was provided for those in attendance who wish to speak.

A. Sapp commented on his tax increase concerns and asked is it all real estate. He stated it is a lot of money based on the people and not getting raises, it is a crazy amount.

Carol Sapp stated she checked with surrounding counties regarding their taxes and millage; and Brooks County was higher. She stated no one would move to Brooks County because of the high taxes and that interest rates are up but income is not.

Donna & David Batts agreed with the previous statements from Mr. Sapp and Mrs. Sapp.

Stephanie Williams, Development Authority, stated she has concerns about the tax increase because property tax grows when economy grows. The property tax increase may cause citizens to move to a neighboring county with lower taxes; with the economy as it is most will not have the ability to pay their taxes and will put pressure on them.

Larie Cooper stated property values went up and now taxes are being raised, how will we afford to pay? This may force citizens to move with a property tax increase while a recession is going on.

Merita Tucker commented she has no more to add to what has been said she feels the same as the other speakers. She lives in the country, the roads are not maintained, there is a lack of services for what taxpayers are paying.

Opal Tillman stated there are roads with potholes, with taxes up will it take care of the roads?

Barbara Murrill, owns property in Brooks County, does not live in Brooks County, inquired as to what determined the increase, is all included and what is it fixing?

James Turner does not live in Brooks County. He commented that the services do not match the amount of the tax increase.

Tony Mock emphasized to the Board that they were elected by districts to serve people in each district; and Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko were the two against raising taxes. He commented regarding fire department not being in compliance and they should read the codes. He further stated he hope they are happy with what have done to the County and fellow taxpayers.

Madine Newsome stated she moved back to Brooks County and since she has been back the taxes have gone up each year; and she agrees with everyone that has spoken.

Citizen by the name of Robin asked questions as to how long has this been in place? What is it impacted by? Vice Chairman authorized the Administrator to respond. Mrs. McKinney advised that \$1.3 million budget increase is based on the departments and their requests.

Peggy Howard recommended the Board move the next Public Hearing on August 17th to a larger venue because there will be a lot of people attending. She commended the two Commissioners, Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko, who voted against the tax increase, for standing up with the people. She asked the Board to revisit the tentative property tax increase.

Amanda Manning stated she can not see how this is going to help, it will hurt the citizens, she is fed up with the roads being like they are.

Vice Chairman closed the public hearing at 11:39 a.m.

Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Jessica J. McKinney, Administrator
Ms. Patricia A. Williams, Clerk