

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for a FY2023-2024 Budget Workshop on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., at the Brooks County Administrative Building, in the Commissioners Meeting Room, located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman, Ms. Myra Exum, Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Ms. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams; County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; and Mr. James Burchett County Attorney, Department Heads, Constitutional Officers; and various residents.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman called the workshop to order at 5:05 pm.

A. **Prayer/Pledge** – County Attorney, Mr. James Burchett, led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

2. **FY2023-2024 BUDGET WORKSHOP**

Building Code/Zoning – The Board allowed Building Code/Zoning, Ms. Sherry Davidson, to address her proposed budget. The proposed budget for Building Code/Zoning is \$77,121.43. Ms. Davidson stated she did not see any discrepancies; but she did flip two-line items, postage was decreased to \$500 from \$1000, and moved \$1000 to gasoline. Mr. Larko questioned the social security calculation increase from last year. Administrator McKinney explained it was because it was not calculated correct in previous years. But because she put more effort into this year's budget in more detail and held department heads more accountable, made sure calculations were appropriate. Ms. McKinney further explained that when the original proposed budget was built, it was based off revenue. So, when given original revenue calculations the Board wanted to do it flat and that is how she did it. The revenue was calculated as flat; the revenue drives what expenditures we can expend. In that original budget, the Board can also note that the revenue was coming in at \$14,952,938.79. There were some increases in the bottom line below the digest, but the digest and general fund numbers remained flat. Then she must make sure all that fits with expenditures. And in the original meeting she advises department heads, at minimum, if they have other items they want to think about when we get ready to establish the millage. And have to work with and what the Board wants to fund, that is how budget is supposed to work, the Board determines how much they want to spend for projects and expenditures that we have across the board. We work backwards because the Board wants to see what the millage is.

Building Permits/Inspections – Mr. Jason Montesano, Building Permits/Inspections, presented his budget, proposed \$83,451.74. Requested increase in gasoline line item from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Mr. Larko questioned increase in social security and revenue. Mr. Montesano explained there is more money, but we are in a new financial software and all income is not in the system. Mrs. Exum questioned the culverts payments and if a fee is added to the total cost; the fee is included in the total payment.

Tax Assessors – Proposed budget for Tax Assessors \$315,043 presented by Chief Tax Appraiser, Mr. Wayne Waldron. Mr. Larko inquired about Other Technical in amount of

\$58,410.15, Mr. Waldron explained that \$15,000 is for system they have, which is a one-time thing. Mr. Larko also inquired about the Temporary Employee line, it was explained that is for the Tax Assessors, last year they were in with Regular employees, but separated out this year in amount of \$10,526. To answer the question regarding postage, increase from \$800 to \$1,000, Mr. Waldron explained mainly because mailing is more for conservation covenant. The education and training increase because this year they were able to go to Tifton and would ride together and share rooms, but next training will be in Athens and Savannah.

Probate Court – Judge, Kathy Shiver, proposed budget \$138,612.62, stated she is not asking for anything above. Mr. Larko inquired about the copier, if it was a new copier, and the server, under Rental Equipment for \$2,340 on a lease program. Mrs. Exum asked if our IT (VC3) can look at it and provide an assessment. Administrator asked Judge Shiver to handle contacting VC3 for the assessment.

Magistrate Court – Proposed budget \$248,360.56 presented by Judge Crosby. Computers (Capital Purchase) \$2,500. Administrator explained that was put in as back up in case a computer was out and would have one to replace, and she does that for all departments across the board. Otherwise, that line-item would be zero. Discussed the build out to the Ag Building, the current rental has mold. The build out would have to come from Capital which is \$200,000 and \$100,00 in contingency. Generating revenue was discussed, but explained he just started getting in citations for the County.

Tax Commissioner – Proposed \$316,028.72, Tax Commissioner, Mrs. Becky Rothrock. Mr. Larko questioned Printing and Mailing (Tag Renewal) \$6,500, Tax Commissioner explained it is for tag renewal mailings, stamps, envelopes. Education and Training was increased to \$3,000 from \$2,000, Contract Labor \$250 from \$1,000, Postage and Freight \$6,500. Administrative (\$2400) line-item for monthly expense allowance based on population, was agreed upon by the Board to add to Tax Commissioner's budget, due other Judges (Probate, Magistrate) are receiving it, but with the understanding that it would cover travel expenses. Projected salary with full staff \$206,221.25, an increase of \$10,412 in recommendation; the proposed budget with changes is \$326,440.72.

Agricultural Resources (Extension) – Mrs. Michasia Dowdy, Extension Office, presented her proposed budget of \$177,310.38, which is a decrease. Requested increase in repair and maintenance of \$4,000, due to having hired 4-H staff, the van is being used more and needs maintenance. Administrator McKinney advised the Board if they do not want to take the increase for repairs out of the operational budget, it can be taken out of contingency or capital. The county paid for the two trucks, the van is separate, a 60/40 split between the county and UGA. Mrs. Dowdy stated that overall, her budget is fine.

Elections – Elections Supervisor, Ms. LaShell DeShazor, proposed budget \$241,746.72. The temporary employees line item was recommended for \$35,000 for the request of increase in poll workers salary, Ms. DeShazor requested \$45,000. Poll Workers do not get

overtime and is included in the temporary employees line. Mrs. Exum questioned the overtime. Administrator advised that she could hire a part-time person at \$10.00 per hour to lower the overtime. The rental (land and building) was increased from \$300 to \$360, due to a miscalculation by Ms. DeShazor. Discussed improvements of the Elections office in the requested amount of \$10,000. Mrs. Exum commented that all the other offices in the Administration Building have been improved and thinks this office should be done as well. Mr. Larko inquired about the legal fees (Attorney) in amount of \$25,000. It was explained about the lawsuit for Elections and being handled by an outside Attorney, due to not being covered by our insurance.

Emergency Management – Ms. LaToya Hampton, EMA and 911 Director, presented the EMA budget of \$9,975, there was no requests, everything is the same. A grant is received for \$7,796.47. Ms. Hampton explained that when she goes to training for EMA, she uses this budget.

E-911 Telephone Service – This budget also presented by Ms. Hampton in the proposed amount of \$679,369.26. The increase in the salary line includes; two additional positions, approved, hourly rate increase warranted an additional certification obtained, and shift differential program to incent night shift pay to help with recruiting/retention. Overtime has never been budgeted as a request; however, overtime is inevitable in the 911 environment. Ms. Hampton explained that 911 Dispatchers get 76 regular hours and 8 1/2 hours overtime, and the overtime previously was not added into the overtime line. By adding overtime into the salary line, it made the increase so high on the budget. Requesting 0.75 cents more for salary for incentives to retain employees and work on night shift. Also, Dispatchers are working more due to increase call volume. Other municipalities (Quitman, Morven, Pavo, Barwick) do not contribute to 911 but use the services.

Law Enforcement Administration – Proposed budget \$360,591.59, presented by Sheriff Dewey. Sheriff stated he did not see any changes to the proposed budget. The other services line (GCIC, etc.) will remain at \$12,000 as it has averaged for the past four years.

Criminal Investigation – Presented by Sheriff Dewey the proposed budget \$424,644.02. Requesting \$10,000 for improvements to the CID building for mold removal, carpet removal, and paint it will be approximately \$10,000/\$15,000. Sheriff stated the carpet removal, and painting can be done by Inmates. Administrator recommended to the Board to not put the improvements in the operational budget but in Building Improvements for CID. Mrs. Exum suggested budgeting \$12,000 and inquired if he is sure he wants carpet. Sheriff stated he would get estimates for carpet. The Board and Administrator suggested LVT instead of carpet and is cheaper which would require less maintenance. Chairman inquired about the air conditioning units; Sheriff stated they do not need replacing they need to be re-worked. The person that will do the mold can do the AC units too. Will get Scott Hockenberry to give an estimate.

Uniform Patrol – Sheriff Dewey also presented this budget of \$1,133,659.02. Sheriff submitted an increase in recommendation during the final adjustments in the uniforms line from \$6000 to \$10,000 due to price increases. Mrs. Exum inquired regarding contract labor line, there was no answer. Administrator McKinney stated she would get with Accounts Payable to research what it is used for.

Jail Operations – Presented by Sheriff Dewey the proposed budget \$1,432,516.15. Sheriff provided pictures of the Jail repairs needing to be done. A Vendor has looked at it and estimated the cost that could be over \$500,000, but probably looking at more than \$1million. Sheriff stated with the size of the Jail we probably would be looking at \$20 million. Mrs. Exum recommended discussing this topic further in a workshop, because this is something we would not want to put in our regular budget. An increase submitted by the Sheriff of \$5,000 to \$10,000 for Prisoner (Housing out of County).

Narcotics-Control Substance – Proposed budget of \$390,655.69 by Sheriff Dewey. A salary was added for an additional Narcotics Officer of, \$32,380 annually. The computer software and support line of \$5,000, reduced to \$3,000, cell/mobile phones was increased from \$5,000 to \$6,000, gasoline increased to \$11,000 from \$10,000.

Victim Witness – Budgeted amount \$135,000 with no changes. Sheriff stated he did not get a budget for Victim Witness, Administrator stated budgets go out to all department heads; but she will provide a copy to him. Administrator McKinney commented that the Victim Witness budget has remained the same. Discussion began regarding the structure/administration of the grant. Administrator stated she had reached out to DA Shealy, and he had explained to her how the grant should be treated and has been treated as such accordingly. She reminded the Sheriff of their concerns about their explanation of it to Mrs. Johns, and it not being understood that way, so we involved you as well as DA Shealy for additional information, and it was left as she is under you. She further stated she and the Sheriff worked with Mrs. Johns during the transition from under the Board of Commissioner to the Sheriff's Department on how the budget would transfer over, on getting a vehicle, and giving additional salary. After further discussion, Administrator will meet with the Sheriff and Mrs. Jackie Johns on Wednesday, August 23rd at 3:00 pm to discuss and get an understanding; and it was decided that at least one Commissioner should be present at the meeting; Mrs. Exum was designated to attend. Administrator stated that District Attorney, Brad Shealy should also be included in the meeting to help us all understand and get on the same page as to how all that should be treated.

The Board discussed meeting dates for the monthly workshop, budget adoption and millage rate. The monthly workshop will be August 30th, rather than August 28th. The budget and millage adoption, and the workshop will be held August 30th, at 5:00 pm at the Courthouse.

Inmate Detail – Budgeted amount for \$41,427.50. The cell/mobile phone line was increased to \$250, uniforms \$1,000, gasoline \$1,000, small equipment \$1,000, and

prisoner uniforms \$500, these increases were submitted in recommendation during final budget adjustments.

Fire Administration – Proposed budget \$213,901.25. The requested/recommended was inline with the actual for 2023. Fire Chief and two training officers are included in the salary of \$96,000, the amounts are already captured. The Board had no questions. He stated he started June 19th as Fire Chief, and the budget was already prepared by former Fire Chief. He did not agree with as stood, things to be added.

Chief Weeks explained that when the Board requested the station closure in East Brooks, the State approved and sent to ISO, they compiled all their numbers and ISO sent it to the insurance companies, they send to insurance companies quarterly. Insurance companies received it June 1st. They receive it during the first quarter and the ISO rating was increased. Chief spoke with the ISO representative, the one did the survey, and was advised that if he enclosed engine bay, install heater, lights, take pictures, and fill out the survey again, since we had just been rated, she felt positive they would go ahead and do a rating, based on the previous survey and everything he had given, but the final determination would be left up to them.

The Board inquired if he had gotten bids, he has bid for \$35,000. Chief state he had to locate without spending a ton of money, it is a quick fix, not what he would have recommended. It is an emergency. He has four contractors; Chief is acting as general contractor. Administrator advised the funds are still in the contingency fund. Attorney Burchett stated the County can serve as contractor as long as are licensed, bonded and insured. County Attorney recommended the Chief talk with the contractors, prepare a contract pending approval by the Board during the August 30th special called meeting. Chief advised we need to get done before the next quarterly report.

Fire Fighting – Presented by Chief Weeks, salary was budgeted at \$562,000, but is \$657,438, difference of \$95,000. Requested increase for repairs and maintenance for \$25,000 but recommended \$35,000, but got deleted, last year \$45,000 was budgeted. Some of the trucks still have bad tires on them. Would cost approximately \$16,000 to replace and need the \$10,000 because of history and old trucks are working on now. Chief explained he swap the part-time with overtime numbers from temporary employees. Uniforms on part-time \$11,260 Administrator increased to \$12,000, and he thinks that would suffice for this year. Turnout gear \$15,000, small equipment increased to \$7,900 from \$2,500 for three radios, gas meter, and thermal imager, the Board agreed with the increase. Increase in gasoline (\$45,000) due to more trucks in service for two full time shifts. Board suggested reaching out to SGRC for assisting with grant. The total proposed budget amount is \$994,788.65.

Fire Station & Building – Proposed budget \$37,700.

Superior Court – Proposed budget \$103,590, presented by Superior Court Clerk, Mrs. Belinda Wheeler. There is an increase in Juror & Witness Fees to \$15,000 due to increase

in court dates. Court Reporter salaries was increased, per Judge Cowart and a 7% increase for regional court cost for Brooks County share. Administrator McKinney will check the amount and send copy of the letter from Judge Cowart to Mr. Larko. Chairman inquired about the pay for Jurors (\$20/day) if it went up and who would change it. Clerk Wheeler advised that the Board could approve the request for increase and then it will go to the Grand Jury. Mrs. Exum inquired about the \$20,000 moved to clerk of court which deleted the salary and the social security. But the Board agreed to leave it in until get more clarification. Discussed Board of Equalizer, the agreed it would remain as is, if funds needed can come from contingency fund.

Clerk of Superior Court – Budget presented in the amount of \$294,450.04. The Board inquired if she has a cell phone or would like a cell phone. She responded she would prefer rather than to use her personal phone, due to sunshine law. Administrator recommended include \$1,500 for a cell phone. Clerk Wheeler stated she is down two people in her office, normally staffed at five, but will not replace at this time will work with what she has.

Clerk Wheeler informed the Board of a request from Ms. Cassie Taylor, Civil Clerk, who has been employed with the county 19 years, April 2024 will be 20 years, and she would like to go from full time to part time, three days a week, but with the same rate of pay of \$18.65 per hour. But she would not receive benefits as part time. She proposed increasing her Criminal Clerk's salary to \$15.00 per hour due to her being sufficient in performing duties in civil and criminal court she is cross trained on every area. County Attorney suggested that Ms. Taylor could resign and re-hire as part time; but not at the same rate of pay. Clerk Wheeler inquired if it would be fair if she came back to pay her \$15.00 per hour with her knowledge and experience. Also, inquired regarding the bond insurance fee if paid yearly or annually; her understanding is it is paid once per term. Administrator suggested the County Clerk maybe able to assist her with obtaining that information.

The Clerk must create space for trial evidence storage; she must designate one of her vaults for storage in the State Court office. The amount budgeted is \$5000, requested \$500 for petty cash for mailings for Juvenile Court and appeals, and create a website for \$750, at \$35.00 per month. She wants some form of communication to let public know about jury duty cancellation.

State Court – Budgeted at \$144,120.37. Clerk informed the Board she needs to budget for CJT for software (\$17,410), her citation software for Sheriff's Office and GSP. Requested funds for deed project, funds have been approved, but project has not started. The years 1987-1989 GSCCCA will reimburse for those years.

Law Library – Budgeted at \$5,000, looks ok per Judge Cowart. County Administrator inquired if there is anything in her budget that's requested that the Law Library can contribute to cost share? Mrs. Wheeler stated she had not found anything based on statute she found. What she read; it does not apply to the deed project.

Governing Body – Mr. Larko inquired about the Auditor line and why paying \$100,000? Administrator explained it is budgeted for \$75,000 but did \$100,000 according to conversation of the Board about possibly splitting between Mr. Zeigler and a third party, it was a projection; and probably because of overtime to get the two audits done. Also inquired regarding the IT contractor, VC3, and if we are continuing with them. Administrator commented we are under a five-year contract with them. The vending machine was questioned, Mrs. McKinney explained the funds goes into the general as reimbursement for supplies; shows up in revenue in the General Fund. Mr. Larko inquired about Capital at \$200,000 reserved for capital projects; Administrator explained it is a recommendation based on previous years. Mrs. McKinney further explained Contingency is less than last year it was budgeted at \$150,000. Before it was added into the Governing Body it was pre-budgeted at \$150,000, \$100,000 for capital, but increased to \$200,000 on the second version, and capital equipment for \$25,000, and for capital other for \$25,000. Questions regarding the contingency fund spend was discussed, and why not showing in line item, Administrator explained it's not showing because it has not been reconciled. But if the Board would like she will go back and check on expenditure(s) out of contingency and did not pull over, because this is the pull over from SmartFusion.

Mrs. Exum had a question regarding consultant line item of \$60,000, retainer for Excellence Exceeded. Are we putting them back on retainer? Administrator McKinney stated that is up to the Board. The jail is being discussed, the new Admin Building is being discussed, but if the Board does not want to retain him, it is entirely up to the Board. Mrs. Exum stated we need to reach out to other sources, nothing against Scott Johnson, just need to do things ourselves and to some degree find other resources. The Attorney line item (\$100,000) was discussed by Mrs. Exum. County Attorney stated the majority of it is for litigation; at least 60%. Mrs. Exum responded that we need to know what we are litigating and figure out if we need to do some education on Workers Comp or whatever it is we are litigating. We need to really look at what we are litigating and look at education on what we are litigating to this expense. Most of the litigation comes from the Sheriff's Department. County Attorney Burchett explained they sit with and talk with the Sheriff's Department about certain procedures; and what they can and can not do. There are people out there that does that. Mrs. Exum stated if it is offered to the Sheriff and he denies it, it needs to be added to his budget. Because when citizens look at the cost, they automatically assume we are paying to the Attorney to pick up the phone to talk to him or drive to Brooks County, not knowing or recognizing it is actual litigation fees to Attorney. Attorney Burchett explained they are doing more than previous Attorney, when they see things that may cause a problem, they interject themselves and step in to try and stop from being a problem. They do not want to be as involved as has been but will give you what you want.

Mrs. Exum recommended to take the \$60,000 line item for consultant out of the proposed budget as we do not need right now. Administrator has all comments and will go back and reconcile all of it. County Administrator will give to Board to review

and when the Board agree with the changes, she will post when we have the public hearing, and when the Board adopt it will be put out for public review. The Board will adopt the proposed budget and millage rate on August 30, 2023 at 5:00 pm.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned at 10:15 pm, on the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman
Ms. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator
Ms. Patricia A. Williams, County Clerk