

MINUTES
MERIWETHER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
September 26, 2023
5:00 P.M.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Bryan Threadgill, Vice Chairman Gene King, Commissioner Rosla Plant, Commissioner Emmett Collins, and Commissioner Adam Worsley

Staff Present: Interim County Administrator Theron Gay, Assistant County Administrator Blue Cole, County Clerk Beverly Thomas, Finance Director Bill Gregory, and Finance Director John Gorton

Staff Absent: Attorney Michael Hill

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Threadgill called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ADOPT AGENDA

Motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to adopt the Agenda. All were in favor.

III. NEW BUSINESS

1. None

IV. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Motion was made by Vice Chairman King and seconded by Adam Worsley to go into a Public Hearing for the proposed FY 2023-2024 Budget. All were in favor. Finance Director, Bill Gregory, stated the County had posted a two-page document on the website per State Law for the 2023-2024 FY Budget. The purpose of the Special Called Meeting and Public Hearing was to introduce the Budget to the Public.

Mr. Gregory reviewed highlights of the Revenue and Expenses.

Revenue for the Local Option Sales Tax has increased, when you take the Property Tax for the current year plus what we expect to receive for the prior year there is an increase of \$200K, Motor Vehicle Tax has increased, Tipping Fees have increased \$150K and the bottom line item transfers in from the fund balance as needed. When you add those, that covers the difference in the 2023 Budget as well as the 2024 Budget. The Property Tax Digest is about 44.5% of the total Budget which is good and is less than 50%. That means the other line items are going up. LMIG increased this year.

On the Expense side, meetings started a few months ago with Constitutional Officers and Department Heads. They brought to the meetings what they had discussed in the earlier meeting with Interim Administrator Theron Gay about the need to get to a salary or hourly rate so they could hire and retain more qualified personnel. Due to that conversation staff looked at some scale increases as well as cost of goods and services, especially in Public Works. Interest on funds at the State Department Treasury Account have increased. General Government has increased \$200K which is second behind the Sheriff's Office. Most of that is due to an increase in Insurance cost on the Property and

Liability side. Utilities have increased, LMIG on the expenditure side has increased. There is a difference in Human Resources of \$217,900 and \$394,000. The \$217,900 was originally about \$370K but when the Board approved the 2.5% merit increase at the beginning of last year we moved funds from that line item in Human Resources to the individual Departments to cover the personnel cost in those departments. The \$374K in this year's budget includes the 2.5% merit raises when and if the Board approves that before the first of the year. Those raises are normally given the first of the year. The Commissioners line item is more due to the new position the Board approved in this year's budget. Chairman Threadgill pointed out this is not the salary of the Commissioners. Each Department and Constitutional Office Budget has been affected by an increase in group insurance and personnel cost. Chairman Threadgill asked about a decrease in the Coroner's Budget and the Health Department Budget. Finance Director Gregory will look into the decrease in the Coroner's Budget and stated there may have been some payment to the Health Dept. for biometric screenings for the County and will look at that as well. Information Technology has increased due to moving a part-time employee to full-time in the new Budget Year as well as the upgrades we did over the past year and \$110K for cyber security system renewals. Public Safety had a scale increase built in if the Board approves. The Sheriff's Office has remained close to the same but they will come back to the Board around the first of the year with a proposal to raise their deputies and jailer's salaries to be able to retain the ones they have to get more qualified positions. Commissioner Worsley asked why would he wait until the first of the year. Mr. Gregory stated it won't increase the Budget and he feels the Sheriff may want to eliminate a few positions to free up the funds to raise those salaries. There is a scale increase built into Public Works plus the cost of goods. The line items that includes gravel for County Roads has been increased. The IDA decreased \$212K due to bonds being paid off.

Mr. Gregory stated there was a 5% increase over last year in the Budget. The Fund Balance is around \$9M-\$9.5M and we will add to that from the Fiscal Year we are completing.

Commissioner Collins stated 911 employee cost was two-thirds of the Fire Department and two-thirds of Public Works. The Fire Department has 10-15 different buildings and the employee pay is only one-third more than 911 and it is in one building. Chairman Threadgill stated it is in one building and they are 24/7. What we have to run the Fire District is probably not included in part of this. If you put EMS and Fire together for that one department it makes a big difference. Commissioner Collins stated the employee pay is not listed on the handout for EMS. Mr. Gregory stated Fire District is a separate fund. EMS is listed under Public Safety. John Gorton stated next year we will combine Public Safety and EMS operating and maintenance. Commissioner Collins confirmed the pay for 911.

There were no other comments.

Motion was made by Adam Worsley and seconded by Emmett Collins to go out of the Public Hearing at 5:13 p.m. All were in favor.

No action was taken.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, motion was made by Rosla Plant and seconded by Emmett Collins to adjourn at 5:14 p.m. All were in favor.

Approved by: Majority vote of the Board of Commissioners

Attest: Bailey Thomas, County Clerk

Date: October 10, 2023