

Baldwin County Commissioners
Public Hearing on Proposed Property Tax Increase
August 31, 2017
10:00 a.m.

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Public Hearing on the proposed property tax increase was held Thursday, August 31, 2017 at 10:00 a.m., Baldwin County Courthouse, Suite 319, 121 North Wilkinson Street, Milledgeville, Georgia with Chair Sammy Hall presiding.

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Members Present: Sammy Hall
Tommy French
Emily C. Davis
Henry Craig
Johnny Westmoreland

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Also Present: David McRee
Dawn Hudson
Jill Adams

Call to Order

Chair Sammy Hall called the Public Hearing to order at 10:00 a.m.

Proposed Property Tax Increase

Finance Director Dawn Hudson reported the County has calculated a 2017 rollback rate of 9.057 and is proposing the millage rate be set at the same rate as last year of 9.85. Since this rate is more than the rollback rate, three public hearings must be held prior to setting the 2017 rate. The County has advertised the required notice of property tax increase and legal notice of three public hearings to solicit public comment regarding the proposed property tax increase. This is third hearing, and the County has advertised that the millage rate will be set Thursday, August 31st at 11:00 a.m.

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Finance Director Dawn Hudson presented information on the timeline for advertising the 2017 Tax Digest and Five Year History, holding required hearings and setting the millage rate. She reported Georgia Law requires that a rollback rate be computed that will produce the same total revenue on the current year's new digest as last year's millage rate would have produced had no reassessment occurred. For 2017, the rollback rate is 9.06 which is 8.76% less than the current rate of 9.85. Ms. Hudson discussed how the millage rate is calculated and presented details of what comprised the additional revenue of 1.2 million dollars that is needed. She discussed the five year history and the proposed 2017 millage rate of 9.85, the effect of the rate on a \$100,000 home with standard homestead exemption, and where property taxes are spent. Finance Director Hudson discussed the proposed tax levy for 2017. She stated Administrative and Financial staff request the County millage rate be set at 9.85.

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Public Comments

Chair Hall opened the floor for public comments from citizens who have signed in to address the Board. The following people addressed the Board:

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Roger Faircloth: Mr. Faircloth asked whether the County contracted out work for other departments and expressed concern that this would reduce employment here. He commented on all the new trucks he sees around the County. Mr. Faircloth also commented on the amount of money the County committed to the hospital. Could the County not look at areas within the county to see where expenditures could be cut? Chair Hall stated the County has cut expenditures and addressed the other concerns.

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Michael Freeman: Mr. Freeman addressed the Board concerning the County mandating citizens participate in garbage collection and the County requiring all citizens to pay for that collection. Now the rate has been increased. He asked how much of fee increase is being retained by the County? Chair Hall and the Finance Director responded that the County does not retain any of the All fees are used to pay

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for the service and the service still costs more than the fees that are collected. Mr. Freeman commented on the number of county vehicles and the fact that employees are allowed to drive the vehicles home.

Kirk Freeman: Mr. Freeman addressed the board about the GMAS contract for over \$600,000. Mr. Freeman did not understand why this work was contracted out. He noted the county purchased land for an industrial park and asked why couldn't companies who want to locate here buy their own land rather than the county buying land which sits vacant? Chair Hall addressed these concerns and noted that companies coming to look at property are usually looking for large acreage that is ready to build upon or has the structure of a building that can be tailored specific to their business. The County must have property available for companies to consider or they will not consider Baldwin County as a viable location.

Clarence Woodall: Mr. Woodall stated that instead of paying \$600,000 for a revaluation why couldn't each property owner be charged \$20 per parcel. This would give the County additional money instead of potentially putting property owners in a situation where they have to find additional funds in a short period of time to pay property tax bills. These concerns were addressed by Chair Hall.

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H. C. Doronhauser. Stated most of his concerns had already been brought up so he would simply speak to Johnny Westmoreland later about his other issues.

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David Simmons: Mr. Simmons thanked the Board for what they do and for working hard for the County. He stated his issues were with the low numbers of jobs in the County, the low home building rate, the fact that the County is still losing jobs, and the high vacancy rate downtown. Mr. Simmons concerns were addressed by Chair Hall.

Kelly Bowen: Mrs. Bowen asked for an explanation of how Baldwin County got to this place. Being cited by the state and ending up spending funds for this contract. Chair Hall explained the process of the state comparing land values and surrounding sales and how they have to be within a certain percentage. Baldwin's percentage was not close enough, therefore the County was cited by the state and either had to do the reassessment or pay a fine.

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Adjournment

Commissioner Emily C. Davis made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing at 10:57 a.m. Vice Chair Tommy French seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Sammy Hall, Chair

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Jill Adams
Assistant Finance Director

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