

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the November 1, 2022

Called Commissioners Workshop Meeting

5:00 P.M. Meeting

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, Vice-Chairman (arrived at 5:13 p.m.)

Eddie Rowland, District 2

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney (arrived at 5:38 p.m.)

Natalie Sundeen, County Attorney

Lorri Robinson, County Finance Director

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome:

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Roll Call:

County Manager Hedges called roll.

Call to Order:

Chairman Tapley called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

New Business

2023 Budget

County Manager Hedges stated that the proposed 2023 total budget will include revenues of \$45,344,000, a decrease of \$2,777,000 from 2022, and expenses of \$43,280,000, a decrease of \$5,014,000 from 2022. County Manager Hedges stated the 2023 budget has included a contingency total of \$2,063,000. He stated that the 2023 budget includes 303 full-time and 92 part-time employees with a freeze on all vacant positions. However, County Manager Hedges stated that a finance position, a building maintenance position, three positions at the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (two patrol and

one warrant service), and six Monroe County Emergency Services positions (at the Smarr fire station) will be allowed to be filled in the 2023 budget. County Manager Hedges stated that significant revenue increases in the 2023 budget include: \$354,000 in Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT), \$350,000 in Probate Court fines, Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) revenues, \$200,000 in life insurance premiums, and \$300,000 in water sales.

County Manager Hedges proposed three additional expenses in the total amount of \$1,553,000 that would cut into the anticipated contingency. County Manager Hedges stated that staffing six additional positions at the Russellville fire station would cost \$346,000. He stated that staffing seven additional MCSO deputies would cost \$383,000, and a 5 percent raise for all county employees other than himself would cost \$824,000.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that the county's millage rate has decreased from 13.331 mills in 2017 to 12.05 mills in 2022. He stated that Monroe County is one of the only counties he is aware of that has decreased property taxes over the past five years. Commissioner Ambrose also stated that County Manager Hedges should be included in the pay raise.

Commissioner Emami stated that windfalls in county revenue over the past several years have led to an expended budget. Chairman Tapley countered that most county expenditures, some of which were purchased with SPLOST funds, have been necessary, and stated that the county no longer needs a tax anticipation note (TAN). Commissioner Ambrose stated that the county didn't have funds in reserves when he took office eight years ago. Commissioner Emami stated he thinks there are many other counties that have reduced the millage rate in recent years and stated that many county property owners have still paid increased taxes due to higher valuations. Commissioner Emami stated that small landowners typically carry a higher tax burden than larger landowners because many large landowners put their land in conservation. Commissioner Rowland stated that even though land is put into conservation, those large landowners are still taxed for their home and two acres. Commissioner Davis stated that landowners whose property has increased in value resulting in higher tax bills will eventually net a higher profit when they sell their tracts.

Commissioners' Comments

No commissioners' comments.

Public Comments

No public comments.

Executive Session

No executive session.

Action from Executive Session

No action from executive session.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 5:59 p.m.

Chairman Tapley seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County clerk