

Clay County Commissioners

Public Hearing on the Budget Proposed for 2017-2018

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Chairman Logan called to order the public hearing on the proposed budget for 2017-2018 at 7:00PM. Those present were: Clay Logan, Chairman; Robert Penland, Commissioner; Randy Nichols, Commissioner; Ed Roach, Commissioner; Dr. Rob Peck, Commissioner; Jacky Sellers, Interim County Manager; Paul Leek; Merinda Woody, County Attorney, and the press and general public.

Mr. Leek read the proposed budget for 2017-2018 to the public and announced that the proposed budget would sit in the finance office for 10 days for public review. He also announced that the Board of Commissioners would have to have a balanced approved budget filed by July 1, 2017. He also announced that the individual commissioners had had input on this proposed budget. (see the attached proposed budget as read and commented on by Mr. Leek)

Chairman Logan opened the floor for public comment:

1. Renee Talley, Tax Collector of the Clay County Tax Office addressed changes to the proposed budget as it related to her department. She also commented on the assessments and that she projects that a larger tax burden will be placed on the homeowners as opposed to vacant land owners due to the re-appraisal that is currently taking place.
2. Pat Margo with the Clay County Board of Elections made a case for purchasing new voting machines since the present voting machines were obsolete.
3. Sandy Zimmerman requested a clarification of the mileage rate being proposed. The current mileage rate is .36 cents per \$100 of property valued plus fire tax. The proposed budget would raise the mileage rate to .41 cents per \$100 plus fire tax.

4. Tommy Davis requested that each commissioner respond as to how that they feel toward a tax rate increase:
 - a. Commissioner Dr. Peck stated that this budget is not a done deal. The county has needs that have to be addressed. We will doublecheck revenues and expenditures. We have concerns about our general fund and meeting our cash flow needs. We want to protect our credit rating.
 - b. Commissioner Nichols stated that not one of us want a tax increase and I am not sure that I agree with everything the proposed budget. But our fund balance continues to decline and we have cut to the bone. We cannot sacrifice these departments, such as the Sheriff's department, EMS, and others.
 - c. Commissioner Roach stated that it is hard to find a budget that is not bloated. Everyone has something that can be taken out. When citizens voted down the sales tax, they voted for a property tax increase. "If you ride the train, you have to pay for it."
 - d. Commissioner Penland stated that he is not in favor of tax increase but he is not going to stand by and put the county in a financial hardship. It is hard to set a budget without knowing revenues. You must have services but if there is not enough revenue to fund these services, you have no choice but to raise taxes.
 - e. Chairman Logan stated that there are more requests for services that the County can pay. If the County can stay close to the status quo then we won't have to raise taxes. We have done a lot of cuts and still have some that we can cut. We want to give our employees a raise. I recommend that we stay at least 8% of our fund balance. I feel confident that if we look really hard at this budget, we can stay where we are at without raising taxes
5. Susan Morgan stated that she supported a property tax increase.

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6. Melvin Swanson stated that the county should look seriously at a reorganization of the county's departments and the services that they provide. In private business, you reorganize and cut spending and tighten your belt. In government, when you want or need money to operate, the County reaches into the taxpayers' pockets and gets more money. The county needs to define the word "need" as opposed to "wants". "Wants" are a luxury. It appears that in this budget that there are a lot of "wants" in the "need" column.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Nichols made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Roach seconded the motion and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Chairman Clay Logan

Commissioner Robert Penland

Commissioner Ed Roach

Commissioner Randy Nichols

Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck

Attested: Clerk to Board

