

Lamar County Commissioners Special Called Meeting
Large Conference Room Administration Building
August 23, 2010
10:00 A.M.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners in and for the County of Lamar, State of Georgia, held a Special Called Meeting in the Large Conference Room at the Administration Building on Monday, August 23, 2010 at 10:00 A.M. Present for the meeting were Chairman Jay Matthews, Vice-Chairman Bennie Horton, Commissioner George R. Brown, Commissioner Nancy M. Thrash and Commissioner Jimmy Hearn.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jay Matthews.

Chairman Matthews opened the discussion by stating the Commissioners are continuing to look at ways to reduce the budget and increase revenue. Mr. Chairman further discussed the fire fund fee and ambulance service fee.

Commissioner George R. Brown said he is against two fees. He says one emergency service fee that is the same for every parcel in the county is fine. He will not vote for two separate fees. He will vote for one emergency services fee for every parcel in the county across the board. He said he does not like it and will hear about it from the citizens of Lamar County for years to come, but if we have to we just need to go up the 2 mill. We have no choice.

Vice-Chairman Bennie Horton stated his thoughts were that the county needs to go ahead and do what is necessary to get out of the woods. If it takes increasing taxes by 2 mills then that is what we need to do. He said the input he has received from citizens is that the county needs to do it correctly so we won't have to go through this again. He stated he was against cutting employees' pay by 10%. Chairman Matthews stated he did not want to cut the employees' pay. If employee cuts are made it will be through furloughs. Vice-Chairman Horton further stated what he is also hearing from the public is to not cut services. He said raise the 2 mill and move forward.

Commissioner Jimmy Hearn said the county has been playing with the budget for the last seven years. For seven years expenditures have gone up and the former commissioners did not address what we needed to do. Taxes should have been raised $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mill to be in line with expenditures increasing. He said if the problem had been addressed back five to six years ago we would not be looking at making the drastic cuts necessary today. Even though he knows the raise in taxes will be hard on the people in Lamar County, he realizes it is necessary. His suggestion was raise taxes by 1 mill and do more cuts. Commissioner Hearn is in total agreement with the fees but feels more research should be done before implementing. He would like to see more concrete numbers than projected numbers before making a final decision.

Fire Chief Steve Andrews gave attendees a little glimpse of the hard work the firefighters are doing to be self sufficient and not have to ask the county for assistance. He stated they have pursued grants, sought alternative money sources, learned to take better care of their equipment and worked under budget every year. He wanted it known their rating has gone from a seven to a five and targeting for a four within a two year window. He stressed the point that the citizens of Lamar County need to realize the savings they will see on their insurance when they can say they live near a fire station and/or have a fire hydrant nearby. He thanked everyone for their continued support of the fire department.

Commissioner Nancy M. Thrash stated most of her thoughts had already been discussed by her peers. She touched on the highlights of the previous conversations.

Sheriff Larry Waller reviewed the Sheriff's Dept. budget.

Several Constitutional Officers spoke on behalf of their employees.

Chairman Matthews stated a ½ mill increase in taxes this year will be better than a 1 mill increase next year. The 1/2 mill increase combined with the proposed fire fund fee and ambulance fund fee should generate enough revenue to operate the county efficiently. He does not want to place the burden of the budget on the backs of the county employees. Commissioner Hearn asked that the Commissioners look at the increase one more time before making their final decision at tomorrow night's meeting. Mr. Chairman set a meeting for tomorrow, August 24th, at 5:00 P.M. prior to the seven o'clock meeting.

There being no further business Commissioner George R. Brown made a motion for the meeting to adjourn at 11:00 a.m. Commissioner Nancy M. Thrash seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous decision.

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

JAY MATTHEWS, CHAIRMAN

BENNIE HORTON, VICE-CHAIRMAN

GEORGE R. BROWN, MEMBER

JIMMY HEARN, MEMBER

NANCY M. THRASH, MEMBER

ATTEST:

WAYNE PATTERSON
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR