

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 26, 2022
CONTINUED SESSION
MINUTES**

Chairman Tate reconvened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the commission boardroom as recessed from the May 10, 2022 regular meeting and stated that the purpose was for the presentations of the proposed Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget, and proposed service fee increases for Burningtown-Iotla Fire Department, Cullasaja Gorge Fire Department, Franklin Fire and Rescue and Otto Fire and Rescue. All Board Members, County Manager Derek Roland, Deputy Clerk Mike Decker, Finance Director Lori Carpenter and members of the news media, county employees and interested citizens were present. County Attorney Eric Ridenour was absent. Chairman Tate requested to add item 5(A), an appointment to the Highlands Tourism Development Commission, to the agenda, and the board agreed by consent to do so.

Presentation of the Recommended Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget: Mr. Roland presented his recommended Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget to the board. A copy of the budget message is attached [Attachment 1] and is hereby made a part of these minutes. The budget as proposed is \$59,047,113 and the highlights were included in a Prezi presentation provided by Mr. Roland. Among those highlights, Mr. Roland stated, “Our economy is booming, but there is uncertainty on the horizon” as he identified the upcoming challenges to be rising costs, supply chain issues and retaining qualified staff. In his summary, Mr. Roland said the proposed budget will “allow us to maintain a high level of service, maintain our solid financial position and remain competitive with no increase in the ad-valorem tax rate.”

Presentations from volunteer fire department representatives regarding proposed service fee increases:

(A) Burningtown-Iotla Fire and Rescue – Board Chair Mike Yacks and Chief Mike Shuler requested a millage rate increase due to increased operating costs as well as expenses for beginning construction of a new facility as the current station is 43 years old and in need of substantial repairs, including replacement of the roof, HVAC, windows and siding. Chief Shuler stated he is requesting an increase of approximately \$118,000, which would increase the department’s tax rate from 10.56 cents to 15.96 cents per \$100 valuation. He said the effect of the increase for a \$350,000 home would be approximately \$18.90. Chief Shuler

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stated that the population of the district has increased from 1,596 people to 2,248 in the past year, and the number of structures has increased from 739 to 1,038 in the past year as well.

(B) Cullasaja Gorge Fire and Rescue – Board Chair Jack Baird and Chief Bobby Henry requested a millage rate increase for the purpose of supporting a new substation on Elijah Road, a new 3,000-gallon truck to replace a 1992 model 1,500-gallon manual shift truck, and another paid fireman. Mr. Baird stated they have not had a millage rate increase since 2008. Chief Henry added that additional funds to support the substation are expected to come from their annual newsletter distribution. They requested an increase in the millage rate from 5.57 cents to 7.20 cents per \$100 valuation.

(C) Franklin Fire and Rescue – Chief Ben Ormond requested a tax rate increase from 5.45 cents to 7.0 cents per \$100 valuation. He stated this would give the department an extra \$252,694 for the use of hiring three full-time fire fighters and the purchase of replacement fire apparatuses. Chief Ormond stated last year they responded to approximately 1,836 calls for medical response, which is 630% more calls on average than the other departments in the county and that the additional personnel would allow for an extra person on each shift.

(D) Otto Fire and Rescue – Board Chair Colby Anderson and Chief Barry Cabe requested a tax rate increase from 1.00 cents to 1.192 cents to assist with covering the cost to begin construction of a new main station. Chief Cabe stated the estimated cost is between \$4.8 million and \$5 million. He reminded the board they requested \$280,000 last year, which was the amount required by SunTrust Bank to approve the loan, but instead was allocated \$166,000. Chief Cabe stated they are requesting \$114,000 to finish out the \$280,000 they need to get the project started with a projected three to four year completion period. He stated that the money that was approved last year as well as donations have been placed in a special account specific for this project. No action was taken.

Consideration of budget amendments #297-304 – Finance Director Lori Carpenter requested approval of budget amendments #297-304 as presented [copies attached]. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to approve the budget amendments as requested.

Discussion regarding scheduling of budget work sessions – After a brief discussion, the board agreed to hold a budget work session on June 7, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the commission boardroom.

Appointment(s) – Chairman Tate announced that Travis Brooks has resigned from the Highlands Tourism Development Commission (TDC) and there is a recommendation for the appointment of Kay Craig, owner of the Ugly Dog Pub, as the new representative of food and beverage businesses. Upon a motion by

Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Higdon, the board voted unanimously to approve the appointment.

RECESS: At 8:49 p.m., upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Young, the board voted unanimously to recess until June 7, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the commission boardroom.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Jim Tate
Board Chair