

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON AUGUST 23, 2012 AT 6:00 AM IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follow:

Philip Jay III	Chairman
OD Netter Jr.	Vice-Chairman
Kathy Davis	Commissioner
Bennie Calloway	Commissioner
Scott Downing	Commissioner
Frank Feild	County Manager
Donna Lampkin	County Clerk
Toni Sawyer	County Attorney

Chairman Philip Jay III called the meeting to order.

Proposed Millage Rate

J.C. Campbell stated the Commissioners are not on the senior citizens side. He expressed his concerns about cutting out fish fry's, Christmas dinner, closing the Senior Citizen Center, cutting out all the seniors privileges, and want to raise taxes.. He stated the County Manager's salary is the reason for the cuts and the need for a tax increase. He mentioned he hope things change.

Allen Conger handed out a list of questions to the public and the Commissioners. He stated the public hearings have been very educational. He thanked everyone for attending the meetings; but made the comment that they can't wait until things are bad to attend the meetings. He stated the Commissioners had heard a lot from the citizens; but the citizens had not heard any answers to their questions.

Ben Mills stated he didn't think the Commissioners were dedicated enough to make decisions. He said they should look seriously at consolidation between the City and the County. He read a list of areas that he felt could save the City and County money if they were consolidated. He mentioned the money Fitzgerald, Water, Light, & Bond gives the City of Fitzgerald and believes that some of that money should be given to the County because county residents use their service too. He stated there is money to be saved if the Commissioners put their mind to it.

Ken Averyt stated he called for 2011 audit, but was redirected to Carl Vinson Institute where he printed a copy of the audit. He said if we don't get a hold of what we have, we are going to lose it. He read from page ninety-six (96) a list of concerns from the Ben Hill County 2011 Audit report. He made the comment that the audit report doesn't list the outstanding taxes and there are not attempts to collect the back taxes. There is a need to take a look at what is not being looked at.

Tax Assessor Joyce Merritt reported Real Property loss \$3,136,792.00 and values were lowered by Assessors. The value loss from agricultural covenant and homestead exemptions are \$1,293,268.00. The FLPA Covenant loss is \$590,722.00. She stated a lot of things must be considered when dealing with the millage rate.

Gudrun Mills stated it was everyone's fault for why we are where we are. She thanked Commissioner Scott Downing and Commissioner Kathy Davis for attending the citizens meeting the previous night. She asked the Commissioners how many of them has run a business and ever had to meet payroll? Then she made the statement when you have knowledge of having to meet payroll; you are interested in making payroll. She then asked the question, what happens if we can't meet our bond debt? She suggested the Commissioners to let the citizens know if the County can't meet their debt. She encouraged the citizens in the community to continue attending the Commissioners meetings and ask questions.

County Manager Frank Feild presented the citizens with a bar graph that displayed the County's millage rate history and explained the the millage rate had not increased in six (6) years.

Vice-Chairman OD Netter made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Kathy Davis seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chairman OD Netter, Commissioner Kathy Davis, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Commissioner Scott Downing all voting for the motion.

The meeting was adjourned.

Philip C. Jay III, Chairman

Donna R. Lampkin, County Clerk