

**MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET MEETING  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING; HONORABLE PATRICIA M. GLASS CHAMBERS  
1112 Manatee Avenue West  
Bradenton, Florida  
JULY 29, 2021**

Meeting video link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUlgjuGhS-qV966RU2Z7AtA>

Present were:

Vanessa Baugh, Chairman  
George Kruse, First Vice-Chairman  
Kevin Van Ostenbridge, Second Vice-Chairman  
Reggie Bellamy, Third Vice-Chairman  
Misty Servia  
James A. Satcher III  
Carol Whitmore

Also present were:

Dr. Scott L. Hopes, Acting County Administrator  
William Clague, County Attorney  
Vicki Tessmer Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

Chairman Baugh called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. 

**INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

1. The Invocation was delivered by Ann Crawford, Grace Bible Church, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

**AGENDA**

BC20210729DOC001

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. **BUDGET RECONCILIATION/TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE**

A duly advertised public hearing was held to take all action necessary to certify millage rates approved herewith to the Property Appraiser.

BC20210729DOC002

Dr. Scott Hopes, County Administrator, reviewed the budget process and it is expected that the tentative millage will be adopted for an adequate budget to meet the needs of Manatee County.

Deputy County Administrator Jan Brewer, used a slide presentation to discuss the Truth In Millage (TRIM), and that the Board cannot charge a millage higher than the amount adopted today, the next steps, the millage must be turned in by August 4 to be in compliance, property values as of the July 1 certification, Save our Homes cap, increase in the certification is due to new construction, revenue changes, net increases, and the total change in revenue of \$1,172,196, net decrease to budget is \$41,972, July 1 Certifications, proposed budget \$853,473,108, increase to stabilization of \$741,005, Statutory compliance, reserves, and changes to cash balance reserves. The pulled item was for a Guardian Ad Litem, but the request has changed to an attorney position.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to provide legal support, and there has always been a need for case managers with Guardian Ad Litem.

 Ms. Brewer continued to stress the importance of the need for a maximum tentative millage. She continued with a slide presentation regarding the Southwest Tax Increment Fund, and provided a financial update to include a chart of revenues and expenditures, fund

balance, and projected revenues. She responded to questions that there are commitments for the Southwest TIF which are accounted for in the budget.

 Dr. Hopes stated the change voted for on Tuesday to reduce the Southwest Tax Increment Funding (SWTIF) to 25 percent decreased the revenue, but it will go back up after a year.

 Discussion ensued that the revenue was decreased by 25 percent for one year, and what is shown in the slides is the projected revenue, but the Board has the ability to change the SWTIF when they want.

 Ms. Brewer continued to explain fund balance, committed expenditures, the actual gains, and even at 25 percent the fund is scheduled to increase.

 Dr. Hopes replied that the expended funds through 2026 are for committed projects. He met with Geri Lopez, Redevelopment and Economic Opportunity Director, regarding her needs to accelerate and expand projects in the SWTIF. The line graph shows the reserves.

 Discussion continued regarding funding the intersection of 26th Street West and Cortez Road, three districts are represented in the SWTIF, and there are needs for right-of-way for improvements.

 Ms. Brewer continued to review existing and new projects with 172 total projects, Capital Improvement Plan projects in the SWTIF, percentages of CIP funding in the SWTIF, include Parks and Natural Resources, Public Safety, transportation, potable water, and wastewater, desire to use SWTIF funds for infrastructure.

 Discussion ensued to modify the SWTIF to use reserves for the projects, and the general fund is being used for the bond.

 Dr. Hopes stated Districts 2, 3, and 4 do not have impact fees to use for improvements, and staff worked to identify how to accelerate projects in the geographic areas and to mitigate for inflation. The \$4.8 million was leveraged to add \$168 million of projects within the SWTIF. They have worked through reserves and stabilization funds, and if it is possible to bond at low rates it creates a balance in the market to insure there are adequate reserves if needed.

 Discussion ensued regarding there is too much cash in the fund and it just sitting there, reserves should be used for improvements for the district, there needs to be a dedicated revenue stream to get a bond, spend down reserves to make a difference in peoples' lives, and the Board agreed that they needed to bond the projects.

 Ms. Brewer reviewed the budget book page 282, providing the accounting the SWTIF, and reviewed the reserves for the SWTIF. There is a specific ordinance for the SWTIF and it is up to the Board to make any changes.

 Geri Lopez, Redevelopment and Economic Opportunity Director, stated staff has followed direction by the Board and there are projects planned, along with \$15 million worth of commitments but not specific projects.

 Discussion ensued that the revenue stream is being used to leverage the bonding, and even with the cut the revenue stream will continue to grow, both infrastructure and economic development are both important, have a realistic plan for what can actually be accomplished, boundaries of the SWTIF, something needs to be done with the DeSoto Mall, must offer incentives, and Amazon is now on Tallevast.

 Discussion ensued regarding the County has an excellent credit line, there has yet to be a recommendation to bond, but that will be discussed in the future, the Infrastructure Sales Tax (IST), recurring guaranteed revenue stream, the ability to bond, the buckets from the general fund were not IST money, IST is a limited revenue stream, the \$5 million reduced from the TIF is giving the ability to have recurring payments in the general fund, and over \$17 million was gained in the general fund.

 Ms. Brewer continued the SWTIF slides to review changes to the SWTIF for the next six years.

 Chairman Baugh encouraged Commissioners to look at procedures and orderly conduct, and encourage everyone be respectful to all present at the meeting (citizens and Board members).

 Discussion ensued this is the one time Commissioners have a chance to discuss things amongst themselves, respect others opinions.

### **Citizen Comments**

 Andra Griffin opposed any increases to the millage including increasing property values.

 Sue Kolze, encouraged having a new animal shelter in east County.

 Ken Piper stated there is a tax increase even though the millage remains the same.

 Mike Meehan referenced a memo he sent to Commissioners and addressed reserves and providing a 50 percent variable tax credit to property owners. BC20210729DOC003

 Kerri Bridge referenced a letter (not submitted) regarding the animal shelter and the need for a future plan for animal services.

 Glen Gibellina stressed providing rehabilitation for homeless veterans, and the need to build affordable housing on infill lots.

 Discussion ensued regarding the millage is going up due to the 0.15 millage increase for environmental lands, balance the millage out, collecting a lot of money and balance with what is already being collected, County is allowed to have 20 percent reserves by Florida Statute and more should not be collected, several changes in the County, by law the County must be responsible for inmates including their health care, and the clinic would help lower costs for inmate medical care, revenues go up when property values go up, instead of lowering the millage, offer a tax holiday for Utilities, 71 percent of voters were in favor of the environmental land tax, history of requests to lower the millage, how much have new properties increased revenue, goal is to give citizens the best quality of life, need to help veterans, everything done by the Board is a process, convert the old jail into a veterans

facility, growth leads to additional costs and the County must provide services to a growing population, several infrastructure improvements are heeded, do not price people out of the market, the millage can be reduced, but it cannot be raised, the tax burden is on the property owners, but utility bills effect everyone, millage was reduced one year during the recession, cost to build a mile of road, anyone can vote against the budget, set millage today and see what can be done, since a balanced budget has been presented, utilities are an enterprise fund, a utility credit would have a greater effect on more people, what would the numbers be if there is a utility credit, services do not increase just because home values increase, stabilization in utilities, and is there a COVID credit to property values.

Motion

A motion was made by Commissioner Kruse and seconded by Chairman Baugh to lower the millage by 0.15 mills to what was presented to the Board.

**RECESS/RECONVENE:** 10:59 a.m. – 11:07 a.m. All Commissioners present.

 Discussion continued that government should live within its means, 42 percent of the increase in revenue is due to new construction, Save our Homes greatly helps homeowners, a small reduction in the millage does little to help homeowners, relationship between revenue and relief to tax payers, ask staff to bring numbers back prior to making a reduction, enterprise funds are government owned businesses, landlords adjust rent to cover all costs, move forward and get scenarios of reductions, be cautious of legal issues, ensure the ability to still keep promises to citizens made during campaigning, allegiance to the citizens not government, lowering the millage 0.15 will not stop projects, explore putting an issue on the ballot to let the citizens know the situation with the environmental lands fund and amending the amount set aside in the years to come, the Commission was told if they accepted the CARES Act funding of \$90 million, they could not lower taxes, taxing restriction with CARES Act funds was specific to State taxes not local, Sarasota County lowered their millage, analysis is important to a setting a budget, everything should be done with the citizens in mind, collect the millage for environmental lands over a longer period of time, and why did the Board not have all the information regarding the CARES Act.

 Ms. Brewer explained there is a 20 percent reserve and an additional 20 percent in stabilization which is for 120 days of operations.

 Discussion ensued that if the proposed millage is adopted ,the millage can still be lowered after looking to see what the effect would be on citizens.

 Ms. Brewer stated that reducing the millage by 0.15 mills, would delete roughly \$6.5 million from the general fund. The three months of operating budget being held is standard practice across the nation.

 Discussion ensued regarding running for the Commission based on infrastructure improvements and these things cost money, but also improve the lives of citizens, a Utility credit will have a larger effect on the average citizen and work toward providing the credit for the month of December, and seek specific projects to delete in order to balance the budget after the millage is reduced and how it will affect the entire county.

 Dr. Hopes stressed that today's public hearing is to specifically approve the TRIM rates to be in compliance with the law. He does not recall this Board asking him to have staff prepare a budget with a reduction in millage to compare to the budget presented in the work

sessions. The Board can follow with a motion to direct the County Administrator to provide scenarios with various reductions to the millage, therefore the proposals will reflect any projects will be affected. It is not fair to suggest that something was not brought forward to the Board that was not asked for.

 Discussion continued to ask the County Administrator to provide an outlook specifically detailing district impacts and the financial impacts if a credit to Utility bills is instituted.

 William Clague, County Attorney, stated he is not prepared at this time to say whether or not the County would be in violation of CARES Act requirements.

 Discussion took place that staff needs to have specific instruction, to prepare what is needed for the Board to make a decision, whatever the proposal is, it needs to have the least effect on the most people, excited to get projects done in districts that have not had improvements in a long time, and the motion for today needs to be in the specific format as written on the agenda.

Motion - Failed

Chairman Baugh withdrew her second; therefore, the motion failed.

 Chairman Baugh encouraged Board members to treat each other with respect.

 Discussion ensued that the \$6 million from the 0.15 mills should not make that much of a difference on tax bills, get as much money back to the citizens as possible, and 20 percent reserves plus the 120 days, should be sufficient.

Motion

 A motion was made by Commissioner Satcher and seconded by Commissioner Van Ostenbridge to direct staff to bring back a proposal regarding a \$100 Utility credit for this December.

There being no public comment, Chairman Baugh closed public comment.

The motion carried 7-0.

Discussion continued that iron sharpens iron to support each other, and continue to look at this on August 17.

Dr. Hopes confirmed that the scenarios for reducing the millage will be presented.

Motion

A motion was made by Commissioner Bellamy and seconded by Commissioner Servia to Authorize the County Administrator to take all action necessary to certify millage rates approved herewith to the Property Appraiser. The motion carried 5-2 with Chairman Baugh and Commissioner Kruse voting nay.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Chairman Baugh adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

Minutes Approved: September 14, 2021