



MINUTES
BUDGET, FINANCE, & ADMINISTRATION
COMMITTEE
BUDGET WORKSHOP
March 18, 2022

MEMBERS, ALL OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. John Elliott, District I, Chairman
Mr. Matthew Durham, District II Mr. Paul Cain, District III
Mr. Julian Davis, District IV Mr. Glenn Hart, District V

The Oconee County Budget, Finance & Administration Committee met Tuesday, March 18, 2022 at 9:00 AM in Council Chambers, Oconee County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Committee members present, as well as County Administrator Amanda F. Brock, County Attorney David Root, and Clerk to Council Jennifer C. Adams present.

Press: Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com/council]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Riley Morningstar / The Journal, Dick Mangrum / WGOG

Members of the staff present: Ladale Price / Finance Director, Connie Bellotte / Accounting Analyst, Mike Crenshaw / Oconee County Sheriff

Call to Order:

Mr. Elliott called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Moment of Silence

Mr. Elliott asked for a moment of silence prior to the Invocation by County Council Chaplain.

Invocation by County Chaplain

Mr. Root, County Council Chaplain, gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Durham led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 - 0, to approve the March 01, 2021 minutes as presented.

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Discussion Items

Mr. Elliott stated there would be a hard stop at 12 noon due to the ground breaking of the new Salem Waterline.

Mr. Elliott also noted, that it is each Councilman and citizen's responsibility to make an appointment with the County Administrator to discuss any budget line questions that they may have.

FY 2022-2023 Budget Discussion and Workshop

Ms. Brock welcomed the Committee and noted that there was a lot of information to cover today.

Ms. Brock started the Budget meeting by offering to review the Council Priority List that was established in the Strategic Planning Retreat held on February 18, 2022 and again reviewed at the Budget, Finance, and Administration meeting that was held on March 1, 2022 [copy filed in backup].

Mr. Elliott instructed Ms. Brock to start with the items that may cost money in the budget, starting with Roadway Infrastructure.

Roadway Infrastructure

Ms. Brock informed the Committee that there is adequate funding from the County and CTC side related to Roadway Infrastructure and that the DOT and DOR were contacted in relation to the monies collected and received by Oconee County from the gas tax, but she has yet to receive that information.

Ms. Brock further noted that she does not recommend any increases in the County Budget related to Roadway Infrastructure and referenced the handout listing road projects, handout entitled "Statewide Summary Report as of January 31, 2022", and handout entitled "New Gas Tax Trust Fund" [copies of handouts filed in backup].

Ms. Brock also stated that the two separate capital millage accounts that were created several years ago, one for Bridges and Culverts and one for Road Maintenance, have adequately been funded for the requests that have been made.

Ms. Brock also informed the Committee that the application on the County website that will allow citizens to report roadway issues will hopefully be live in about two weeks.

Ms. Brock recommended to the Committee, in relation to Roadway Infrastructure, that the County maintain the current operational cost and millage designation for the capital accounts.

Wages and Employee Salaries

Mr. Elliott noted that wages and employee salaries will cost more in the County Budget.

Ms. Brock noted that wages will be impacted by the approval for the requested new positions and referred to the handout that outlines the requested new positions [copy filed in backup].

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Ms. Brock provided details on the following position requests and the budget impact they could potentially have if approved.

1. Sheriff's Office
 - 3 Deputy Request
 - 1 Corporal to Sargent for an SRO
 - 1 Corporal to Sargent for P.A.C.E
 - 1 part-time to full-time employee
2. Code Enforcement
 - 1 Code Enforcement Officer
3. Clerk of Court
 - 1 Court Clerk
4. Oconee County Parks
 - 1 Full-time Park Ranger for Chau Ram
5. 911 Communication Center
 - 1 Full-time Dispatcher
6. Fire Stations
 - 3 Firefighters
7. Procurement Department
 - 1 Buyer

Ms. Brock noted that the total for all the requested positions including fringe, but not wage increases, is \$600,986.00.

Extended discussion followed between the Committee and Ms. Brock related to the requested new positions.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve requested positions for budget formation, along with the additional data to support the requested positions be provided.

Mr. Durham questioned the motion presented by Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis explained to Mr. Durham that the motion is not approving the positions, the motion is to approve the requested positions for budget formation and that the budget will be presented with three readings and two public hearings before the final approval.

Mr. Elliott noted to Mr. Durham that the motion is not approving the positions, the motion is to approve the requested positions for budget formation purposes.

Ms. Brock expressed her appreciation to the Committee for their consideration on what items should be considered into the proposed budget and noted that it is easier to take an item out, than to wedge an item back into the budget.

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Motion approved, 5 – 0, to approve requested positions for budget formation, along with the additional data to support the requested positions be provided.

Ms. Brock addressed Mr. Elliott requesting to go back and further discuss wages and employee salaries.

Ms. Brock noted to the Committee to reference a handout showing operational and salary information [copy filed in backup].

Ms. Brock informed the Committee that municipalities within Oconee County and our neighboring counties intend to raise employee salaries anywhere from 5.6% to 8%.

Ms. Brock provided a handout of a salary table for the Committees information [copy filed in backup], noting she is not asking for the Committee to adopt this scale, but this would be a great recruitment tool and would provide employees, or potential employees, an idea of where their salary would stand in relation to years of service.

Ms. Brock requested the Committee consider a one-time 5 or 6% cost of living raise for all County employees, including the proposed new positions, and utilized a handout showing current department salaries [copy filed in backup] and how each of these percentages would affect the budget.

Ms. Brock continued by providing additional salary information regarding the request for an increase in Law Enforcement wages to the Committee.

Ms. Brock noted to the Committee that the County is losing employees and potential employees due to the current wages the County offers.

Mr. Elliott inquired about who conducts exit interviews for employees that leave the County.

Ms. Brock informed the Committee that exit interviews are performed by the department head and if the employee is leaving on bad terms, HR holds the interview.

Mr. Elliott noted that the public is suffering as well due to the current inflation and wanted to clarify that there will not be an increase on property tax this year.

Ms. Brock informed Mr. Elliott and the Committee that the request for salary and wages increase will not require a property tax increase in Oconee County.

Ms. Christy Hubbard, Oconee County Auditor, addressed the Committee providing information related to taxes, millage, and the County budget.

Mr. Davis offered his opinion to the Committee regarding employee salary and wage increases.

Mr. Durham noted that the Sheriff's salary does not compare to some salary positions in the County and to neighboring counties Sheriff's salaries.

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Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to add the topic regarding the Sheriff's salary as an Executive Session item at the April 5, 2022 County Council meeting.

Ms. Brock informed the Committee that with the vacancies that the Sheriff's office currently has, there is enough money to increase the Sheriff's salary tomorrow.

Mr. Elliott stated that he would like for the topic of the Sheriff's salary to be an item included in Executive Sessions at the April 5, 2022 Council meeting.

Mr. Cain offered additional clarification regarding property reassessment and property taxes.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to take a short break and reconvene 10:35.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Durham, approved 5 – 0, to resume the Budget Workshop.

Mr. Durham offered further clarification related to property taxes.

Ms. Brock provided additional information to the Committee related to millage, taxes, and the formation of the coming year County budget.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, to direct County Administrator to calculate a one time, 6% cost of living raise for County employees while developing the proposed budget.

Mr. Elliott noted that this percentage can be changed when the budget comes before Council.

Mr. Cain requested that an average wage and salary report be collected of elected officials across the state, excluding Oconee County, be provided for some direction related to the Sheriff's salary.

Ms. Brock noted that the above request by Mr. Cain will be added as an Executive Session item at the April 5, 2022 Council meeting.

Mr. Root, County Attorney, offered clarification to the Committee concerning increasing Council salaries and a timeline of when the increase would take effect, if approved.

Motion to direct County Administrator to calculate a one time, 6% cost of living raise for County employees while developing the proposed budget approved 4 – 1, with Mr. Hart opposed.

Ms. Brock asked for the vote count related to the motion that was made earlier by Mr. Durham, seconded by Mr. Hart, to add the topic of the Sheriff's salary to be an item included in Executive Sessions at the April 5, 2022 Council meeting.

Motion approved 5 – 0, to add the topic of the Sheriff's salary as an Executive Sessions item at the April 5, 2022 Council meeting.

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Sewer Expansion

Ms. Brock addressed the Committee utilizing a handout entitled “I-85 Corridor Sewer Expansion” [copy filed in backup] and provided information related to cost estimation for engineering and potential sewer expansion opportunities, and noted that direction for a feasibility and engineering study is being requested from the Committee.

Ms. Brock noted to the Committee that there is designated millage in Economic Development with an approximate 3.7-million-dollar fund balance.

Ms. Brock noted to the Committee that it makes sense to run this study concurrently with the Sewer Authorities Basin Study that is already in process for a more cohesive plan.

Mr. Cain made a motion, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve the request to start a feasibility and engineering study related to sewer expansion.

Mr. Hart commented that the current map that was provided [copy in backup] does not show the selected study area reaching his property but wants to clarify if he needs to recuse himself from this motion.

Mr. Root clarified that since the motion is for budget direction only, that a recusal is not needed at this time but could possibly be needed later in the process.

Ms. Brock stated for the record that the provided map [copy in backup] is just a conceptual for the area that would be covered by the study and could possibly change.

Motion made by Mr. Cain to approve the request to start a feasibility and engineering study related to sewer expansion, approved 5 – 0.

Solid Waste Facility Improvements

Ms. Brock noted that there are two parts to this discussion.

1. MSW Tipping Fees
2. Capital Improvements to Solid Waste Facilities

Mr. Elliott stated that with the recent information provided related to MSW Tipping Fees in a handouts entitled “Solid Waste”, “Oconee County Solid Waste Complex Customer Report”, and “Oconee County Solid Waste Complex Truck Report” [copies filed in backup], there is a possibility that if the tipping fees were to be eliminated altogether, then there would be no encouragement to recycle.

Mr. Elliott commented that he thinks a 25% reduction in the MSW Tipping Fees would help the private haulers.

Ms. Brock provided an estimated cost to the Committee that would be incurred if tipping fees were eliminated for small, private haulers.

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Ms. Brock continued to provide background information related to private haulers, municipalities, and MSW Tipping Fees.

Mr. Durham offered his opinion related to MSW Tipping Fees, private haulers, and municipalities that haul outside of city limits.

Mr. Davis noted there is a cost of doing business and a cost of convenience and careful consideration should be taken in regards to reducing tipping fees.

Extended discussion followed by the Committee and Ms. Brock related to Solid Waste and MSW Tipping Fees.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to reduce MSW Tipping Fees for private haulers by 50%.

Mr. Davis noted he supports a 50% reduction in tipping fees for budget direction but if that shows that 100% reduction would be allowable, he would support that as well.

Mr. Cain noted that he would rather put worse case scenarios into the budget at 100% cut of tipping fees and that the Committee should be focused on charging out of county residential garbage disposal fees.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, to amend Mr. Davis's motion and take the tipping fees down to zero for Oconee County residential waste private haulers.

Ms. Brock addressed the Committee stating once again there is no way to track residential waste that is solely from Oconee County.

Short discussion followed related to MSW Tipping Fees.

Motion to amend Mr. Davis's motion of a 25% reduction in tipping fees down to zero for Oconee County residential waste haulers approved 4 – 1, with Mr. Davis opposed.

Amended motion to reduce tipping fees to zero for Oconee County residential waste haulers approved 4 – 1, with Mr. Davis opposed.

Capital Request / Brown Goods Compactor

Ms. Brock addressed the Committee utilizing handouts entitled “Solid Waste Brown Goods” and “One Time Capital Request Per Department” [copies filed in backup], noting the Brown Goods Compactor Capital Request is going to be included in budget formation by direction from the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health, and Welfare Committee.

Ms. Brock read down the One Time Capital Request list for the Committee and offered additional information related to those requests.

Mr. Durham requested information from the Coroner's office as to how many times a year the Coroner needs an x-ray of a deceased person.

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Ms. Brock stated she would gather and provide this information from the Coroner's office.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cain, approved 5 – 0, to approve including the Capital Request items as presented in budget formation for FY 2022-2023.

Fee Schedule

Ms. Brock addressed council utilizing a handout entitled "Oconee County, South Carolina Fees Schedule 2022-2023 Budget" [copy filed in backup].

Ms. Brock provided further information to the Committee as requested for the presented Fee Schedule increases within the County.

Mr. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve the inclusion of the presented requested fee increases for budget formation purposes.

Utica

Ms. Brock informed the Committee that there are several options for getting started on accomplishing goals in Utica and provided information related to these options.

Adjourn

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer C. Adams
Clerk to Council

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