



BALDWIN COUNTY WORK SESSION

October 18, 2022

1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220

4:00 PM

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

**Henry Craig
John Westmoreland
Sammy Hall
Kendrick Butts
Emily Davis (Virtual)**

ALSO PRESENT

**Carlos Tobar
David McRee
Dawn Hudson
Cindy Cunningham**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Craig called the Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

The following Elected Officials presented information on their FY 2023 budget requests:

Tax Commissioner Cathy Settle reported the 2021 tax bills have been sent out, and payments have started coming in. She presented an update on the previous year's tax collections as well as operations of the Tax Commissioner office. She stated the only changes included in her 2023 budget request are reflective of inflation. She thanked Commissioners for their support to office.

District Attorney Wright Barksdale gave an update on the number of cases filed, closed and those remaining open at this time. He stated he feels there is a decline in some types of crimes due to the working relationships with the Sheriff's Department and also because of the additional position of Investigator. The DA stated he has no additional budget requests. District Attorney Barksdale expressed his appreciation for the support of the Commissioners. Commissioner Davis asked Mr. Barksdale about the backup in the Victims' Assistance program. Mr. Barksdale stated there is a program at the State level that provides compensation to victims; however, there is nothing that can be done at the local level to expedite the process. Once applications for assistance are completed at the DA's office, they are sent to the State, and it is entirely up to how quickly the State moves the applications through.

Probate Judge Todd Blackwell stated he has no additional requests for the Probate Court budget. He discussed the Elections budget and reported the current way election equipment is moved is not working adequately. The twenty-six foot Ryder truck with the lift gate that he rents to move equipment is not sufficient because it does not hold all the equipment. Therefore, personal vehicles are being used to help with this situation. Judge Blackwell requested that Elections be able to utilize a County truck from another Department to haul equipment to and from precincts and to take required paperwork to the State. Judge Blackwell also reported that the Boddie Precinct is in terrible condition. He discussed the consideration of moving this precinct in the future. He stated relocating a precinct is not an easy task; but, he does not recommend consolidating this precinct with another site. He feels it should be an

independent site located in District 3. Requirements for the building were discussed as well as possible locations. Judge Blackwell thanked Commissioners for their support of the Probate Court and Elections Department.

Sheriff Bill Masee addressed the Board stating there are no significant increases requested in the FY 2023 Budget. He said he had met with Assistant County Manager Hudson regarding his FY 2023 budget, and he has no requests to bring before the Board at this time. Sheriff Masee discussed technology changes such as camera installations, tag readers, applying for warrants on-line and zoom capabilities for reading of rights that have helped his Department. He discussed continued mental health issues. He expressed his appreciation to Commissioners for their continued support.

Magistrate Court Judge Shane Geeter stated his operational budget has been adequate to cover the needs of his office. Judge Geeter discussed future needs and requested the following: an additional computer terminal for the front desk in the Magistrate Court office. Judge Geeter stated there is a statutory requirement that anyone who is arrested must have an appearance before a Judge within 72 hours; therefore, he requests two additional laptops to assist with first appearances. He stated that in a future budget he would request an additional position to provide a receptionist for the office. He thanked the Commissioners for their support of his office.

Solicitor General Skye Gess stated the State Court office has been very busy. She discussed the increase of the case load in State Court which is caused by a number of factors. She stated a minor ticket day has been put in place within her office for traffic court in order for people to have an opportunity to discuss their minor ticket violations. Solicitor General Gess discussed several concerns that will be coming up in the future. She reported the VOCA grant entirely funds the three victim advocates in her office. The grant for the victims' assistance program has been submitted to CJCC, and she is hopeful that the grant will fully fund this program. Ms. Gess discussed the increase in the caseload that comes through State Court which in turn has increased their workload. She reported her office is experiencing growth and additional resources are needed. An Assistant Solicitor General was added in previous budgets which is a great help. However, there is a need for an additional attorney to help with the balance out the increase in cases from State Court as Magistrate Court such as ordinance violations, i.e. animal neglect and animal cruelty issues and other County ordinance violations. She stated she had addressed one proposal in her budget request letter and will be providing additional updates in the future. There is a possibility the Georgia General Assembly will require prosecuting attorneys to become responsible for input into GCIC which is a database of criminal history. This will be a definite increase in the workload; therefore, the office would need an additional clerk for this requirement. Solicitor General Gess stated she would be happy to create a plan for discussion with the use of victim fine money to help alleviate the increase in costs for the additional positions.

Adjournment

Commissioner Sammy Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Commissioner Kendrick Butts seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Henry R. Craig
Chairman

Cynthia K. Cunningham
County Clerk