



**Decatur County Board of Commissioners  
June 6, 2011**

**PRESS RELEASE for FISCAL YEAR 11/12 BUDGET**

The operating budget is the most important document that is produced each year by a county government. It is the only document which summarizes the entire collections of all public programs which are to be undertaken by the county government during the coming fiscal year.

The annual operating budget is the plan which guides the operations of a county government and its various units. In addition, it is a document which provides county citizens with information they can use to determine the efficiency of the county's operations.

For the last five years, the Board of Commissioners has operated with a Finance Committee whose members have worked very closely with County Finance Director Carl Rowland and other staff members in developing the operating budget. The Committee this year is comprised of Dr. Earl Perry, chairman, Mr. Russell Smith, and Mr. Frank Loeffler.

The process this year began on March 28 with Mr. Rowland requesting elected officials and department heads to prepare their FY 11/12 budget information for submission to him on April 11. On April 6, Mr. Rowland met with the Committee to provide a review of anticipated revenues for FY 11/12.

For nine days, from April 19 until May 6, the Committee, Mr. Rowland, County Administrator Tom Patton, and County Human Resources Director Marjorie Mayfield conducted individual meetings with the elected officials and department heads to review their wants and needs. These meetings resulted in the elimination of practically all the 'wants' and some of the questionable 'needs.' The presentations by the officials and department heads were extremely well done, and the eliminations/reductions were, in general, well accepted by the officials and department heads.

The Committee, Mr. Rowland, Mr. Patton, and Mrs. Mayfield met on May 25 and 27 for further review of the office/department budget requests in an attempt to identify additional items to eliminate/reduce in order to match the total expenditure requests with the anticipated revenue.

As a result of the meetings with the elected official and department heads and these May meetings, expenditures totaling \$1,266,000 were identified and eliminated from the initially requested \$18,377,000. Over \$800,000 of these cuts were accomplished by freezing two vacant positions in the sheriff's office; freezing four vacant positions at the jail; freezing 3 vacant positions at Public Works; eliminating an excavator, dump truck and mowing tractor from Public Works; and reducing the budget for a low-boy truck for Public Works.

The Committee and staff members were of the opinion that any additional eliminations or reductions would result in a reduction in the county services the citizens generally expect.

Unfortunately, however, because of increases in workers' compensation, general liability, and fuel costs, it was necessary for the total expenditure requests to be increased by \$400,000.

Thus, the new total requested for expenditures was \$17,510,472, while the anticipated revenue was \$16,409,501. Hence, the Committee and staff members needed to determine how to raise an additional \$1,100,971 in revenue.

Discussions pertaining to removing from the budget the annual county payments to the Hospital Authority and the Development Authority by assigning fixed millage rates to these authorities led the Committee to recommend that fixed millage rates be assigned to these two authorities, so that the Tax Commissioner would collect these funds and transmit them directly to the authorities.

The Committee's recommendation was that 0.30 mill be assigned to the Hospital Authority and 0.25 mill be assigned to the Development Authority. The Hospital Authority would receive \$249,600, and the \$250,000 payment would be removed from the budget. The Development Authority would receive \$208,000 and the \$191,553 budgeted for it would be removed.

Both funds assigned to these two authorities will benefit the entire citizenry in that the Development Authority funds will be used to seek additional jobs for the county and the Hospital Authority funds will be used to defray expenses for indigent care.

At this stage, the remaining needed additional revenue was \$659,418.

The Committee's recommendation was that the millage rate for county government be increased to provide this additional revenue. This recommendation was not made in haste. Rather, it was based on a thorough review of the county's millage-rate history and the millage rates of seven neighboring counties in southwest Georgia.

A study of the 2010 millage rates of neighboring counties indicated the following county rates: Baker – 7.62 mills, Colquitt – 12.971 mills, Early – 11.44 mills, Grady – 12.9 mills, Miller – 17.5 mills, Mitchell – 18.339, Seminole – 13.42. **Decatur’s 2010 rate was 8.56 mills.** A study of the county’s millage-rate history indicated that the last millage rate increase was done in 1995.

The total 2010 millage rates (including state, county, board of education, library millages) of neighboring counties were: Baker – 22.75 mills, Colquitt – 21.684 mills, Early – 26.69 mills, Grady – 23.65 mills, Miller – 33.923 mills, Mitchell – 32.573 mills, Seminole – 32.943 mills. **Decatur’s 2010 total rate was 21.8 mills.**

The Committee’s recommendation was the county’s millage rate be increased by 0.80 mills. This increase will produce \$665,600. Since \$659,418 is the amount needed to balance the budget, the remaining \$6,182 will be added to the contingency fund in the financial administration budget.

It is with great regret that for the fourth consecutive year the employees will not be receiving a cost of living adjustment to their income. However, with the unemployment situation presently existing in the county, the Board is pleased to be able to continue their employment without pay reductions, furloughs, layoffs, or terminations.

In concluding, the budget will be balanced, with the 0.30 mill assigned to the Hospital Authority, the 0.25 mill assigned to the Development Authority, and the county millage being increased from 8.56 mills to 9.36 mills.

The total millage increase of 1.35 mills will result in the average property owner paying about \$35 in increased property taxes. However, since many properties have decreased in value during the last two years those properties owners will realize a decrease or no increase in property taxes.

The Board of Commissioners will continue its effort to provide quality services to the county’s citizens at the most economical expense.

# Tax Payer Burden of Service for Each \$1 County Taxes Paid

