

The Banks County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on November 19, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. in the board room of the Banks County Courthouse Annex. The purpose of the hearing was to discuss the proposed millage rate increase of 20.66% or 1.75 mills.

Ch. Dalton opened the hearing and asked if anyone would like to speak.

Ray Holcombe spoke stating he appreciated the job the commissioners do, but property taxes are unfair taxes because people that don't have to pay property tax still have the same benefits as the ones that pay property taxes. He wanted the commissioners to look at other revenues before raising property taxes.

Comm. Cain stated they had cut the budget from last year and put a hiring freeze in place for sometime, but had to take it off because of public safety.

Ch. Dalton stated they are positions where people left and they had not been replaced. He said this year's budget has no frills and only necessities.

Tax Commissioner Margaret Ausburn stated that the governor and general assembly did not fund the Home Owner's Tax Relief Grant this year and that would add another \$173.78 without the millage rate increase. The proposed millage rate increase would add another \$70 for every \$100,000 in property value.

Ch. Dalton stated in the five year history, four out of five years were rolled back.

Comm. Cain stated if he knew the economy was going to get so bad he wouldn't have rolled the millage back, but he wanted to be fair to the citizens.

Ray Holcombe asked if the commissioners had looked at furloughs. Comm. Cain said he looked at furloughs and most would be public safety and it would only save around \$40,000. Ch. Dalton stated most of our employees are not on the high end of the pay scale and having people not at work would take people out of the County.

Margaret Ausburn spoke on behalf of the assessors stating the state has frozen property values until 2012. She said they will not be able to do reassessments until the freeze has been lifted.

Deidra Moore, E911/EMA Director stated in order to save money she has filled full time positions with part-time people to save money on benefits. She also stated the 911 fund reimbursed the general fund with \$200,000 for operation of the 911 Center.

Ch. Dalton stated that even though the budget was down 8% revenues were down 11%.

Jerry Loftice asked if the commissioners have considered reassigning jobs and doubling up duties.

Ray Holcombe wanted the expenditures explained. Randy Failyer, Finance Officer explained the expenditures. Mr. Holcombe stated since property value has been frozen can't the County cut some employees in the tax assessor's office. Comm. Cain stated two people have quit and they didn't hire to fill those vacant positions.

Jerry Loftice stated isn't the Chamber and CVB basically the same and why aren't they combined. Comm. Cain stated he would like to see them combined. He stated there is state law on where tourism money has to be spent.

Ch. Dalton adjourned the public hearing at 9:35 a.m.

Chairman

Assistant County Clerk
