

The Banks County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing/called meeting on November 30, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the board room of the Banks County Courthouse Annex. The purpose the hearing/meeting was to discuss the proposed millage rate increase of 20.66% or 1.75 mills. Present were Chairman Milton Dalton, Vice Chairman Joe Barefoot and Commissioner Rickey Cain.

Ch. Dalton opened the hearing/meeting stating each person could speak for five minutes.

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.

Those citizens voicing concerns with the proposed increase were as follows:

Titus Herr stated his property tax bill has never decreased since he moved to Banks County in 1998.

Jerry Shaw stated we were in a deep recession and times are hard and it's a terrible time to raise taxes. We all have budgets and need to stick to them. He said when you spend, spend, spend, you are going to get out of budget. He stated a lot of things could be put on hold.

Ken Duckett stated he wants to echo what others are saying. He said he has been back in the County for twenty years and concerned that he doesn't see much for what he is paying. Due to the economy he shouldn't see an increase and wants the County to do what he is doing, cutting back.

Brenda Duckett stated she is a realtor and wanted to echo what has already been said. She said her income has been lower than ever this year. She said she feels the buildings are important, but who we are and how we are served matter more. The services and warm friendly feeling are what we need in Banks County. Please reconsider where we can actually cut.

James King stated he and his wife are on a fixed income and doesn't feel like they can get by if they have to pay any more taxes.

Edwin Booth stated he lived in the Baldwin area and as a taxpayer they get hit everywhere. When the County tries to ask people that are already stretched to pay more, they just can't. He stated there needs to be a cap on property taxes.

Rosa Gailey stated she lives on Silver Shoals Road and understands the commissioners have a hard job and has to pay taxes just like everyone else but thinks this is a large tax hike. She said the cost of living has gone up and wondering if there can be some sort of compromise and don't raise the taxes all at one time because of the bad economy.

Richard Crowder stated he lived at 123 Charity Drive and had some questions. He asked if the receipts have cleared for the Annex and Courthouse and are they over budget. Finance Officer Randy Failyer stated there was a SPLOST report placed in the newspaper that told what the expenses were. Mr. Crowder asked about cutting overtime from the two biggest budgets, the Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department. Mr. Crowder asked about the commissioners pay raise and when did it start. Comm. Cain stated that it started about three years ago and Ch. Dalton's didn't start until he entered into office January 1, 2009. Mr. Crowder also asked if the sales tax could be increased. Ch. Dalton stated the sales tax could not be raised anymore.

Gary Clark stated that nobody likes to say they don't have a job and if the foreclosure rate is at 52% how can you expect them to pay their taxes. He stated the reason the sales tax is down is because people don't have the money to spend. He stated the County is going to have to do furloughs, cut positions and expenses. He stated he knew the commissioners had a hard decision to make.

Stephanie Payne stated she had some question and concerns. Why are the commissioner's voting to shut down small business when they are the ones paying property taxes. She stated the schools have been taking furlough days so why hasn't the County.

Marion Meaders asked why it takes so long for the tax bills to come out. He said the County needed to realize what was going on and needed to draw a line somewhere.

Comm. Cain stated he was proud to see everyone here tonight. Personally he is willing to see if he can get with the elected officials and department heads to see if the budgets can be cut more. He asked how many people called their legislator when the Homeowner's Tax Relief Grant was not funded? He stated the state put it back on the local governments. He said he welcomed everyone at the budget hearing and that Banks County millage was one of the lowest in the state of Georgia. Comm. Cain said he wanted to see Banks County millage rate stay low so people can keep the country way of life. Dalton said he was also willing to go back and look at lowering the budget, but it would mean the tax bills will be going out later. Vice Ch. Barefoot stated that during the budget time they kept the economy in mind. He is willing to go back and cut budgets and encouraged people to come to budget hearings.

Comm. Cain made a motion to call the meeting to order. Vice Ch. Barefoot seconded. Two aye votes and Ch. Dalton called the meeting to order.

Comm. Cain made a motion to cancel the meeting for the proposed millage rate increase. Vice Ch. Barefoot seconded. Two aye votes and the motion passed.

Mrs. Ausburn stated she had petitioned to the revenue commissioner so people can make partial payments for tax deductions for 2009.

Comm. Cain made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice Ch. Barefoot seconded. Two aye votes and meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Chairman

Assistant County Clerk
