

THE MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP MEETING  
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
HELD ON DECEMBER 3, 2020 AT 11:00 AM IN THE  
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follow:

Steve Taylor	Chairman
Hope Harmon	Vice-Chair
Bennie Calloway	Commissioner
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
John Mooney	Commissioner
Michael Dinnerman	County Manager
Donna R. Prather	County Clerk

Chairman Steve Taylor called the meeting.

**2021 Proposed Budget**

County Manager Michael Dinnerman and CFO Darlow Maxwell gave the Commissioners a copy of the proposed 2021 budget for their review. Mr. Dinnerman stated some salary changes, software upgrades, and software licensing made up the \$200,000 increase in the budget. He also stated, we are operating at a more professional level regarding computers and the phone system.

CFO Darlow Maxwell stated he started with the audited numbers from 2018 and 2019 to help generate the budget and he was open to answer all questions.

The Commissioners reviewed the proposed 2021 budget presented to them. They discussed the revenues and expenditures by line items and asked questions. The Commissioner thanked CFO Darlow Maxwell for a job well done on the budget book.

The Commissioners discussed the increase in the Joint Services budget proposed by the City of Fitzgerald. The Commissioners discussed staying at the 2020 budget funding level for 2021. County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated we are really close to a balanced budget for 2021.

**Letter/City**

County Manager Michael Dinnerman presented the Commissioners with a response letter he received from the Mayor Jim Puckett regarding funding the Fitzgerald Ben Hill County Joint Services and double taxation of the citizens and property owners of the City of Fitzgerald. The Commissioners discussed the letter in regard to funding Joint Services.

Mr. Dinnerman stated, the County utilizes insurance premium tax funds to pay its portion of the joint services and if there is a shortfall, we will address and rectify the tax inequity at the time we set the millage rate.

**Hospital Authority**

County Manager Michael Dinnerman and Commissioners discussed the letter from the County Attorney regarding the legality of providing SPLOST funds to the Hospital Authority. Mr. Dinnerman stated the bond debt is not Ben Hill County debt unless the Hospital closes; therefore, providing SPLOST funds to pay off hospital debt is an unauthorized use of Ben Hill County SPLOST funds.

The Commissioners discussed the findings in the letter.

Chairman Steve Taylor reminded the Commissioners they have the obligation of filling the two vacancies on the Hospital Authority Board.

**Auditors**

County Manager Michael Dinnerman stated Tony Eckler, Meeks CPA Auditor, is branching out to start his own Auditing Firm. Meeks CPA has agreed to allow Mr. Eckler to take the auditing side of the firm while they continue preparing taxes. Pat Ashley also called Mr. Dinnerman confirming the agreement with Tony Eckler.

Mr. Dinnerman explained his reasons for continuing with Tony Eckler as the County's Auditor. He stated he is comfortable with him, he is familiar with the County's finances due to his employment with Meeks CPA, and it would be a smoother transition.

The meeting was adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_ Steve Taylor, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ Donna R. Prather, County Clerk