

**LEE COUNTY COUNCIL
CALLED MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 28, 2022
MAIN COURT ROOM – SECOND FLOOR OF THE COURTHOUSE**

Members present were Travis Windham, Chairman; Alexander Boyd, member; Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman; Charles A. Beasley, member; Johnette Caughman, member; Ron Fountain, member. Staff present were Alan Watkins, Administrator; Julie Stokes, Assistant Administrator/Clerk to Council; Michael Davis. Others present were Gee Whetsel, Bernard McDaniel, Shareka Anderson, Queenie Boyd.

FOIA

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, all individuals requesting notifications were so notified.

OPEN MEETING, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Chairman Windham opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Vice-Chairman Eckley gave the invocation.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGENDA

The agenda was approved as written by a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilman Boyd.

REQUEST FOR MOTION ON ADOPTION OF THIRD AND FINAL READING OF ORDINANCE

A. LEE COUNTY BUDGET FY 23

Councilman Beasley made the motion to approve the Lee County Budget FY 23 as a balanced budget in the amount of \$14,653,183 with no tax increase. He said this does include a 1.5% cost of living increase for employees. Councilperson Caughman seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

A handout is attached for reference on budget info. Chairman Windham said that he wished the Council could do more for its employees but said that he was concerned about the following year.

Chairman Windham said that in reference to the user fees and the potential lawsuit, the legislature has been amended the statute for the counties to keep the fees, so this financial impact is no longer a concern.

However, the ag use buildings are being exempted for farming operations starting this year. Chairman Windham recommended that the Building Committee and Clarence Caudill meet to get a clear understanding of this change.

Mr. Watkins said that Department of Commerce would forward the County a clear understanding of the law. He said that there is a potential loss of \$300,000 plus with this change.

B. LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BUDGET FY23

Vice-Chairman Eckley said the school district is requesting the maximum tax increase of 6.7 mills or approximately \$178,890 based on last year's projected mill value. The FY 23 School District Budget reflects local revenue for District operations which include the Maximum Ad Valorem Tax Increase of 6.7 mills and when combined with School District projections for other Local Revenue Sources, including vehicle fees would create an additional \$435,991 for the FY 23 Operational Budget. In addition, the School District is projecting an additional \$922,467 in Revenue from state funding for FY 23 over what was projected in the FY 22 Operations Budget.

When the additional Local and State Revenue for the Lee County School District is totaled, the District's FY 23 Operational Budget would increase by \$1,358,458 over the school district's previous FY 22 operational budget.

Vice-Chairman Eckley said if the Council were to adjust the Tax Increase from 6.7 mills to 3.3 mills, the district's overall increase in their proposed budget would be reduced by approximately \$90,780. The district's overall budget would still increase from FY 22 to FY 23 by \$1,267,678, based on the School District's projected State and Local Revenues. The district's overall FY 23 Operational Budget would be \$17,684,381 or 99.5% of the district's original proposal.

Vice-Chairman Eckley said that to add the maximum tax increase to the current financial burden of small businesses would make the situation worse with the tax increase being passed down to small businesses and then consumers.

Vice-Chairman Eckley made the motion that council consider an increase of 3.3 mills for the School District for FY23. He said by making this adjustment to the original request, the Council would reflect both a concern for the needs of the School District by increasing their local revenue, but also showing this Council's concern for the small businesses in the community as well as our citizens who would feel the impact of a tax increase.

Councilman Fountain seconded Vice-Chairman Eckley's motion. Councilman Boyd abstained from voting due to his wife is on school board. Mr. Watkins said that the numbers Vice-Chairman Eckley reflected were from their budget, which is a 99% increase in their budget.

Chairman Windham said the County needs to keep things in place so that we can attract industry.

Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF RECREATIONAL FALL SAFETY SURFACING

Chairman Windham read the resolution. Mr. Watkins said the Council approved the order of the equipment at the last meeting and the equipment came in at a lower price than expected. He said the fall safety surfacing was a rubberized material and would greatly reduce the maintenance.

Councilman Boyd made the motion to approve the resolution. Vice-Chairman Eckley seconded the motion. Chairman Windham called for the vote, and motion carried. All voted in favor.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE GRANT FOR ENGINEERING OF FENCING FOR THE LEE COUNTY AIRPORT

Mr. Watkins said the County has been working with FAA to secure wildlife security fence because there have been deer, etc. on runway at times.

The FAA is to pay for 90% of the total cost of installation, with SC Aeronautics paying 5%, and the County paying 5%. Mr. Watkins said the grant for the engineering is \$2,280 and this would be put out for bid in September.

Chairman Windham thanked Mr. Watkins for staying on top of this situation.

Chairman Windham made everyone aware of the retirement for Jon Brannon on Thursday, June 30, at the Colclough Building.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m. on a motion made by Councilman Beasley, seconded by Councilman Boyd.

CHAIRMAN

VICE-CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO COUNCIL

MINUTES APPROVED

