

Minutes
Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3rd Floor
225 North Board Street
November 17, 2014

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 9:00 a.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Moses Gross, Chairman, Dist. 2	Kenneth E. Hickey, Vice-Chairman, Dist. 3,
Merrill E. Baker, Jr., Dist. 1	Mark NeSmith, Dist. 4
Hershel P. Ansley, Dist. 5	Wiley E. Grady, Dist. 6
Phillip V. Brown, Dist. 7	J. Elaine Mays, Dist. 8

Staff present was Michael Stephenson, County Manager, Laura Nichols, Finance Manager, and Twink Monahan, County Clerk. Media present were Patti Dozier, Times-Enterprise and Chris Hurst with WPAX Radio.

Chairman Gross called the meeting to order.

Chairman Gross recognized Commissioner Brown who gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Gross declared a public hearing to receive comments concerning the 2015 Budget. Chairman Gross called for comments and being none, closed the public hearing.

CLERK OF COURT

The grand jury requested a \$10.00 increase for the jurors and the bailiffs in a letter received from Tina Richards, Foreperson. The juror's per diem is currently set at \$30 and the bailiff's at \$40.00 which would raise them to \$40 and \$50.00 for the bailiffs. Mr. Stephenson stated that the amount is set by the Board of Commissioners at their discretion.

Chairman Gross recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion to approve the \$10.00 per diem increase for the grand jurors and bailiffs. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion carried unanimously.

CAPITAL REQUESTS

TAX ASSESSOR

The Assessor's Office has requested a new vehicle to replace the 1996 Lumina. Mr. Stephenson stated that the Lumina has high mileage. Chairman Gross asked that we shop for a used vehicle with 25 to 30,000 miles. Commissioner NeSmith stated that the staff has to stop and start continuously and they need well running car.

Chairman Gross recognized Commissioner Grady who made a motion that for staff to locate a used vehicle with low mileage with a cost not to exceed \$28,000 and bring before the Purchasing Committee when it is time to purchase. The motion was seconded by Commissioner NeSmith and approved unanimously.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Kent Edwards stated that he is going to retire at the end of 2014. He introduced Chief Assistant Wade Krueger. Mr. Krueger will present the 2015 budget request.

Their requests were discussed at length and how the overall budget is divided pro rata between the counties in the district. The priority was set for reinstating the part time position for \$2,903, the mandated increase for retirement and health insurance for \$11,097 and a \$2,000 for supplements for a total of \$16,000. There was no vote.

PUBLIC WORKS

Tony Wooten is requesting replacement of the 1995 rubber tire excavator. It needs \$25 to \$30,000 currently in repairs. A new unit will cost approximately \$215,000 with the trade in value ranging from \$12 to \$20,000. After discussion, the board asked Mr. Wooten to take the unit for evaluation before they make a final decision.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Presenting the Sheriff's Office were Sheriff Powell, Charity Manwaring, Capt. Ron James, Capt. Chuck McDonald, Lt. Tim Watkins, Lt. Andy Forte, and Cmdr. Kevin Lee.

Sheriff Powell reviewed his vehicle requests. The manager's recommendation is to approve four (4) patrol units and one patrol unit for the new resource officer position. The trucks for investigations and patrol were not included in the manager's recommendation. Capt. McDonald requested further consideration for the license plate recognition equipment. He explained how the equipment would aid them in law enforcement. The cost is \$20,800 with an annual reoccurring cost of \$500 for support per machine.

Lt. Watkins reviewed his requests and thanked the board for their recommended approvals.

Captain James apologized but he had left off a request for 20 body cameras in the small equipment account. He explained that the cameras record all activities and protect the deputies from false allegations and can be submitted in lawsuits. He also stated that the reason for the additional jailer position is for the heavy influx of mentally ill inmates. There has now been over 700 transfers this year to facilities outside Thomas County for housing the mentally ill.

Capt. McDonald explained why the department needs a 4 wheel drive pickup truck.

Sheriff Powell introduced Lt. Andy Forte from the Identification Division. Lt. Forte has assumed the position of Glenn Hutchinson, a recent retiree.

VICE

Commander Lee said that he has 2 lapel cameras in his budget and would appreciate the board approving \$1,400 more to the budget in order for all 6 agents to have them.

At 11:35 the board recessed for lunch.

At 1:10 the board resumed the review of the 2015 Budget.

The board discussed the vehicle for the Tax Assessor's Office. It was decided to leave in the \$28,000 for a vehicle and let Donnie Baggett search for a unit that would meet their needs with 25-30,000 miles and a lower price.

The board briefly discussed line items in the Building Maintenance Budget. Commissioner Grady asked about the parking lot repairs for Thomas Plaza. Mr. Stephenson stated that they are getting a better estimate for the project.

The furniture in the Magistrate budget is for after the renovation, likewise the Sheriff's budget.

Commissioner NeSmith asked the board to make a decision about pay raises before the final budget recommendation.

Commissioner Gross stated that he is in favor of the manager's recommendation to give 2¢ per year of service, totaling \$144,938.80. Commissioner Hickey stated that he would like the employees to keep the spouses on the health insurance and no raise.

Fund	Total	FICA	TOTAL .01	TOTAL .02
General	48,468.16	3,707.81	52,175.97	104,351.95
E911	3,465.28	265.09	3,730.37	7,460.75
Central Fire	1,674.40	128.09	1,802.49	3,604.98
Thomas Co Fire	2,063.10	157.83	2,220.93	4,441.85
Emergency Services	9,651.72	738.36	10,390.08	20,780.15
Transit	1,996.80	152.76	2,149.56	4,299.11
TOTAL	67,319.46	5,149.94	72,469.40	144,938.80

Commissioner NeSmith said that health insurance is 20% of the county budget and increasing yearly. The 'rainy day' amount in 2014 is \$649,498 and 2015 is \$318,708 and everything that is approved beyond the manager's recommendation will reduce that amount.

Commissioner Hickey stated that he would like to see consideration for a mixer and a spreader in the Public Works budget with all the projects that are coming up the next few years. Mr. Stephenson said that could be funded in the 2012 SPLOST and the board needs to go back and review the SPLOST budget and projects.

Chairman Gross stated that the ambulance coming out of service (M1) can be converted to a detail truck for Public Works. Mr. Wooten had requested 2 used Penske trucks to be used for detail trucks but they were not in the Manager's recommendation.

The automation of the Hansell Sanitation site was in the long range capital improvement plan and that was the \$80,000 in site improvements for Sanitation.

Commissioner Grady stated that he would like to see the health insurance revisited mid-year since the change would not affect the 2015 budget.

After general discussions of the capital purchases the board discussed the pay increases again. It was noted that the budget already reflects the 2¢ pay increases.

Chairman Gross recognized Commissioner Brown who made a motion to approve a 2¢ per hour, per year of service pay increase for all full time county employees for 2015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mays. Motion carried by a 5 to 3 vote; Chairman Gross, and Commissioners Baker, Ansley, Grady, and Brown voting aye. Vice-Chairman Hickey, Commissioners Mays and NeSmith voting nay.

After making adjustments to the Manager’s recommendation the amount for the rainy day account was lowered to \$170,486.

Rainy Day (Manager’s Recommendation)	\$318,708
Public Defender – Insurance & Retirement and Part time personnel	-16,000
Sheriff’s Office – Body Cameras	-7,000
Sheriff’s Office – License recognition software and equipment	-20,800
Sheriff’s Office – 2 Patrol cars (6 total)	-74,328
Investigations – Truck	-28,694
Vice – Body Cameras	-1,400
Rainy Day (with additional capital purchases)	\$170,486

Chairman Gross recognized Vice-Chairman Hickey who made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Grady and approved unanimously.



 Moses L. Gross, Chairman

ATTEST:



 M. Twink Monahan, County Clerk