

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CONTINUED SESSION
JUNE 17, 2013
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin reconvened the meeting at 6 p.m. in the commission boardroom as recessed from the June 13, 2013 continuation meeting. All board members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director and County Attorney were present. Also present were members of the news media and interested citizens.

Without objection from the board, and prior to consideration of approving the recommended Fiscal Year 2013-2014 budget, Chairman Corbin opened the floor to receive public comment. The following individuals spoke:

Sheriff Robert Holland thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. He told the board that the budget they would adopt is not perfect. He said he does not want to see taxes raised and encouraged the board to support the budget as prepared and presented by the County Manager and Finance Director. He thanked the board members for their efforts and service to the county, even though he did not agree with them at all times.

Michael Gaines expressed his appreciation to the board for the effort on the budget.

Kenneth McCaskill told the board that he disagreed with the decision to deny the fire tax increase requested by the Burningtown-Iotla Volunteer Fire Department (VFD), and he presented Commissioner Higdon with a book entitled "Smart Moves for People in Charge."

Les Slater said that he agreed with the County Manager's comments relative to the school system budget, adding that the county should pursue special consideration for its K-12 schools from the General Assembly.

Heather Snyder told the board that she had been with the Burningtown-Iotla VFD for 18 years and that she felt very strongly about adding a paid person to the department. She said that she and others had collected 80 signatures on a petition that supported a tax increase to fund a paid firefighter.

Mike Shuler, a member of the Burningtown-Iotla VFD, said that he had talked with residents of the district, who told him they were willing to “take a hit on the tax increase” if it would save lives.

Bill Maynard, also a member of the Burningtown-Iotla VFD, said he was disappointed with the board’s decision, stating, “I don’t see how in good conscience that you can vote the way you voted” regarding the proposed tax increase.

Jessica Maney, a member of the Burningtown-Iotla VFD, spoke in support of having a paid firefighter/first responder.

Carmen Thompson spoke in support of the Burningtown community and the Burningtown-Iotla VFD firefighters.

Robert Thompson, also a member of the Burningtown-Iotla VFD, talked about the importance of having someone on duty at the station. He said that every station in Macon County should have a paid person, closing with, “We need this.”

Mike Roper told the board that he had been a member of Burningtown-Iotla VFD for 22 years and said that the hike in the tax rate would save lives and property. “We need it bad,” he said.

Chris Baldwin and Jim Breedlove spoke in support of the proposed budget, with Mr. Breedlove saying that the school board will be good stewards of the funding from the county. He raised an issue regarding how much flexibility the board of education has when it comes to using money allocated by the county, adding that he would like a formal vote by the commissioners stating that such flexibility exists. The County Manager said the commissioners would need a formal request from the school board in order to act on that matter.

Commissioner Higdon said that being a volunteer firefighter is a tough, thankless job, but said that government has expanded in size and scope more than it should have, and that when he took the oath to serve as a commissioner, he “would not support expansion of the size and scope of government,” adding that he did not think that the taxpayers support the increase for Burningtown-Iotla.

Following the public comment period, Chairman Corbin explained that there were two items of business before the board, the first being an ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2012-2013 budget, and upon a motion by Commissioner Tate, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted unanimously to adopt the ordinance as presented (Attachment 1), a copy of which is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

The board then addressed the budget ordinance for the upcoming year. The Finance Director explained that she had added approximately \$25,000 to the budget on this date, with the County Manager explaining that the addition was related to the cost of draining two ponds at the newly acquired Parker Meadows property, adding it was better to include the cost in the budget now rather than amending it later.

The discussion then turned to the fire department tax rate for Burningtown-Iotla, resulting in a lengthy debate among the board members. Upon a motion by Commissioner Haven, seconded by Commissioner Beale, the board voted 4-1 to fund the additional one-cent increase on the tax rate for the Burningtown-Iotla district, with Commissioner Higdon opposing.

Commissioner Tate made a motion to approve the budget ordinance for Fiscal Year 2013-2014 as presented, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Beale. Chairman Corbin offered each board member the opportunity to speak prior to the vote. Commissioner Haven commented that the new budget “was not up to par” with previous years. Commissioner Tate said he was obviously in favor of the budget and told the board to be ready next year to address staffing issues with emergency services. Commissioner Beale said this was “a good workable budget.” Chairman Corbin commented that “being conservative is when you balance the budget with no tax increase.” Commissioner Higdon said the board added \$500,000 to the budget last week “with the snap of a finger” and there were items that he could not vote for. The motion passed 3-2, with Commissioners Beale, Corbin and Tate in favor, and with Commissioners Higdon and Haven opposing. A copy of the ordinance is attached (Attachment 2) and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

With no other business, and upon a motion by Commissioner Higdon, seconded by Commissioner Haven, the board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:03 p.m.

Jack Horton, County Manager
Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman