

**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
FLOYD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
AUGUST 04, 2015                            6:00 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Larry Maxey, Vice-Chairman Garry Fricks, Commissioners Irwin Bagwell, Scotty Hancock, and Rhonda Wallace.

## OTHERS

**PRESENT:** County Manager Jamie McCord, County Attorney Wade Hoyt, and Interim County Clerk Jaime Armstrong.

## CALL TO

**ORDER:** Chairman Larry Maxey called the meeting to order.

**INVOCATION:** Commissioner Rhonda Wallace led the Invocation.

## PLEDGE OF

**ALLEGIANCE:** Commissioner Scotty Handcock led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC HEARING TO RECEIVE COMMENTS REGARDING 2015 MILLAGE RATE.**

Chairman Maxey declared the Public Hearing open, and asked if there is anyone to speak in support or opposition of the proposed millage rate.

**Ansley Saville, 833 Hill Creek Road,** stated she is here to speak about the Sara Hightower Library, and as they all know, she is now chair of that board. She stated they have been through several budget cuts since 2010. The total amount of their budget cuts and reductions of the general fund since 2010 is \$1,100,000.00 to the library. She stated she believes that they are all aware that their hours of operation have been reduced from seven days a week to five days a week. The library now has eleven frozen full-time positions. She stated the 2012 budget cut resulted in the layoff of ten part-time employees, and the facilities and grounds management position was abolished in 2014 along with the part-time switchboard operator position. She never thought that she would stand and say that she was for a millage rate increase, not for taxes, but the county is business. When they have cut their costs to the point that they begin cutting into the quality of life, which she feels that the library attributes to their quality of life, it is time. She stated she thinks she had this conversation with Commissioner Bagwell once before when she was begging for money. They cut the millage rate a while ago. She thinks it is time that they go back, pay their bills and catch up. She stated that this does not need to go into the emergency fund. This is not a tornado, nor have they had a meteor drop in the middle of Rome, Georgia. She stated that the library is in dire needs now, and they cannot suffer another cut. Just as a side note, she spent the day with twenty-five women from out of town with the garden study course that the National Garden Clubs is funding. She stated that they had it here in Rome, Georgia in the Laurel District. She was very proud that they chose to come to Rome. She stated these women from all over the state raved about how wonderful Rome is. They said that the people here were welcoming, and went on and on about how beautiful Broad Street was. She stated she wants that to continue. She has grown up here; she has been here since 1960. If she has to go to Atlanta, it is all she can do to just pass through there. She stated it is all anyone can do to get through that traffic. They do not have that problem here in Rome. She stated that she really hopes as she mentioned that there would not be another cut to the library because she has heard rumors of possibly another cut. She does hope that they will consider the quality of life that they have here. She thanked the Board.

**Mike Morton, 1118 Park Boulevard**, stated he is here once again to speak in favor of taking the necessary funds from the reserve fund, the rainy day to pay the deficit and the sales tax refund that totals some \$2.2 million for Floyd County. He stated that it is his belief that the tax paying citizens of Floyd County would support the reserve fund as the means of resolving the deficit balances. As a matter of fact, he has talked to many citizens in the last week who when they discovered that the reserve fund was a means for funding, they were most anxious to use it and support it. He stated it is his proposal that the Board act to use the reserve fund, and strike the 0.833 millage rate increase from any consideration whatsoever. While it has been said that it may be wise to strike a compromise at a lower millage rate plus limited removal from the reserve fund, he feels that the most fiscally sound means is the use of the reserve fund only. He stated this proposal is the most fiscally responsible means. It is most respectful of the taxpayers and it uses the rainy day fund for what it is intended. He stated just think about it, the citizens have been overtaxed for years in building the reserve fund. It is time to restore some of that over taxation to the citizens. He stated Commissioners, you work for we the people. It is time that you (*the Board*) follow their desire, strike the 0.833 millage rate and take the fund for the deficit and sales tax refund from the rainy day fund. He thanked the Board for their attention.

**Harry Pierce, 2 Willbanks Road**, state he is a businessman and a citizen of the community. He has been involved with this topic for a while as most of them in this room, or at least this Board, are aware. He stated he supports the millage rate increase only for a couple of reasons. They are not here to talk about a lot of them, they could start in Washington, but he knows that he has a limited amount of time and it goes all the way down to small counties like Floyd County. He stated it is called a waste of money. They have been wasting money from Washington all the way down to Floyd County. He stated there are hard decisions that have to be made but unfortunately it is coming at the suffering of the women and men that protect this community. They

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have not had a raise in forever. He stated they watch what is on television and they watch the deaths in Floyd County just in this year. They cannot continue to build tennis courts, or continue to say that they are going to bring people into this community but not raise the hotel tax rate. He stated they are the ones that are going to benefit, he is not. They cannot continue to expand the runway at an airport that most of the people in this community, and probably this room, have nothing to do with. He stated there are hard decisions to be made. The decisions that they make on this commission are the same decisions that he has to make on a daily basis to ensure that his balance sheets balance, and he does not see that happening here. He stated that does not mean that he does not agree with it because he does agree with it. What scares him is that some of them will be up for reelection soon, all of them will eventually, and they will be asked the question "did you agree on the millage rate increase", and if you did, "why". He stated what he hopes does not come out of their mouths is because our police departments needed a raise. He is trying to get three more businesses moved to Rome as they are speaking, so he is trying to bring more business into Floyd County.

He stated the police department and the sheriff's department, those two departments he saw on the budget this morning at 4:00 a.m. as he was studying them, gave money back to the county based on their budgets. There were other departments that he looked at and said you have got to be kidding me. He stated they are losing money every year, but they are going to put another \$900,000.00 to a million dollars of SPLOST money into it. It just does not make sense from a businessman standpoint which may be why Donald Trump is doing so well in Washington right now, he does not know. He stated some common sense things have to be ruled out; who is going to be reelected, who is not going to be reelected, what is the best thing for the citizens of Floyd County, and what it is not the best things. Those kind of get intermingled, he gets that, it happens. He stated that for eight years they have been robbing Peter to pay Paul. He thinks it is time to pay the fiddle; they are going to have to do that. He stated he never knew, until he started coming to a couple of these meetings, that they had \$14 million in a rainy day fund. Well, he agrees with the other gentleman, it is not only raining, but they have a hurricane on their hands right now. He stated it may not be a stage five, but it is probably a stage three considering what has happened in the first six months of this year on their streets. They are more than competitive on the surrounding markets on millage rate. He stated he thinks it is justifiable, but he does not think that it is justifiable if they keep doing some of the same things they have been doing and spending money. If they think about it, the jail was built on SPLOST, the recreation department was built on SPLOST, and the Forum was built on SPLOST. What he does not think is happening is when they put these SPLOST issues on the table, nobody is building in what it is going to take for the next thirty years to maintain these buildings. He stated they all have to be ready for when business goes down. It is fine when you start to build it, but when business goes down they have to make those hard decisions. He stated everyone here knows him, and know how he feels about it. They have to take care of their men and women who are out there every day; if this is what it is about, to do this, then they have to do it, but he thinks they need to come to the public, and please do not use that as the reason for raising the millage rate. He stated raising the millage rate has nothing to do with their men and women who are out there protecting and serving them on a daily basis. He thanked the Board.

**Wright Bagby, 317 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue**, thanked the Board for allowing him to speak to them. He stated he would like to speak to them about two things, both of them relate to taxes. First, he supports their proposal to increase the millage rate. He thinks it has been a long time coming. He stated he thinks that they have cut, and done a lot of things that maybe not everyone sees. They have a lot of roads that need paving, a lot of equipment that needs replacing, and bigger than all of that might be where they stand with their bond rating. He stated if they continue down the path they have gone, he does not believe that they can maintain their bond rating that has been so hard to come by and so well kept up by the city and the county. He would love to see them stay the road on that. He stated all of his family lives here; his grandchildren are all here, his children are all here, and after he is gone, he does not want them to have to be paying for things that possibly they could have taken care of now. He would like to see them do that; he supports them on that. He stated it is a tough decision, but that is what they are elected for, to make tough decisions, which is not always fun. The other thing he would like to mention to them that is totally related to this is that he would like to see them, and he thinks that some of them are, but he would love to see them as a county become real strong leaders in the ACCG movement to do something about the Department of Revenue and the secrecy of their operations. He would bet them that there is not one person up here in the front, he knows he does not, that believes the sales tax numbers that they get, but they do not have any way of finding out because everything is done by secret. He stated they do not get any information, nor does Gary Burkhalter get any information of how those are developed and what they are doing. He would love to see them be a leader in that to force an issue here. The sales tax problem with a local company, he has no idea who that is. He stated in his opinion that company should to be thankful that they are getting the principal back and should give the interest back to Floyd County, Rome, and Cave Spring. There is no way that any of them can make twelve percent on their investment so if they had any sense they would overpay everything to earn twelve percent and just get it back after ten years. He stated their person made the error and they should be glad to get it back. He hopes that they will keep fighting that battle; he knows the city is, and hopes that they do too, but he supports their tax increase. He thanked the Board.

**Lindsey Howerton, DFCS Director**, stated she is the County Director with Floyd County DFCS here in Rome, Georgia. She stated as a citizen, and a local agency social worker, she is extremely concerned about the cuts that their agency has faced in the county funded programs over the last few years. It appears that these programs will face further reductions if they do not approve the proposed millage rate, or if that millage rate is not supported. Since January 2014, their agency has actually received a thirty-eight percent reduction in funds provided by the county, and that budget reduction has directly affected the services and

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programs available for their communities' most vulnerable citizens. She stated county funds provided a staff position, which is actually Lynn Barton who is with her today. The county funded staff position determines eligibility for the county clinic, indigent burials, and programs such as monetary assistance for emergency needs for citizens through general assistance and reimbursements to local foster families for children in foster care from Floyd County. She stated none of these programs are funded by the state; all of these programs are funded directly through county funds contributed and allocated through their county budget. All of them will face elimination if they do not approve and support the proposed millage rate. She stated since January 2014, they have also had a thirty-two percent increase in the number of children who have entered foster care in Floyd County. Again, that is a thirty-eight percent reduction in funds from the county, but a thirty-two percent increase in the number of children entering foster care in Floyd County. She stated as of today they have over four hundred children from the Floyd County community that are in foster care, and the Rome Judicial Circuit is actually number one, the highest ranked, in the state for the number of removals of children from the Floyd County community entering foster care. That is number one out of forty-nine judicial circuits. She stated the children entering foster care depend on local families in Floyd County to provide a safe and caring home while they are in foster care, and they only have fifteen DFCS foster homes. Only fifteen DFCS foster homes for over four hundred children, so seventy-five percent of the children entering care from Floyd County actually leave their community and leave their county when they enter foster care due to the lack of foster homes in the Floyd County community.

She stated one of the reasons that they lack the foster homes is because they lack the support to support the foster families in caring for them. This is what these county funds provide. She stated they provide support for reimbursements to local families so that they can open up their homes and their hearts to care for children from the Floyd County community. County funds are used to reimburse foster families for expenses such as haircuts, birthday gifts, emergency clothing, school supplies, diapers for young kids, and emergency medical expenses that are not covered by Medicaid. She stated all these depend on funds allocated by the county, which would face elimination if the millage rate is not supported and not approved. Reduction and elimination of our county funds eliminates reimbursements of all of these items. She stated not only does this directly affect the care that the foster families provide, but it severely affects their agency's ability to recruit and develop more foster families for the kids in this community. She would like Lynn Barton to speak because again her position is actually paid, directly funded by county funds allocated by the Board.

**Lynn Barton, DFCS Case Manager**, stated she works for Floyd County DFCS. She stated she has been there for ten years, and in the last ten years, she has been the supervisor and the case manager for the county programs that are mandated through previous county commissions. One of those is the indigent burial program, or the pauper burial program. She stated this program along with the county clinic and with the general services program serves some of the poorest of the poor in Floyd County. To be eligible for these programs these families have to be at or below the federal poverty level for their household size. She stated for one person that means that they cannot have more than \$900.00 a month income from any source. Last year in 2014, they took fifty-eight applications for indigent burials and they approved thirty-seven of those. She stated five of those burials were children that were under the age of five. These families did not have resources to bury these children or their loved ones. She stated in addition to this program, she is also the case manager for the county clinic program, which was mandated in 1999 by the county commission in collaboration with Floyd Medical Center. Again, this program serves the poorest of the poor and medically needy that are not served by any other program, and are not eligible for any other services. She stated these are the people who fall in the gap; they fall in the gap between Obamacare and Medicaid. In the state of Georgia, they have not expanded Medicaid to include adults that are very low income. She stated if they do not have minor children in their homes, they are not aged sixty-five or older, or have already been declared disabled, then they do not have medical resources. At the current time, she has five hundred and twenty ongoing clients. She stated she takes approximately one hundred and twenty new applications every month, and determine their eligibility based on the criteria that was set forth in 1999 by the Floyd County Commission. One of those criteria is that they have to be a Floyd County resident for six months before they are eligible for this program. It is also based on a hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

She stated the third program that she administers for DFCS is the general assistance fund. The money for this program comes directly from the county commission and is part of the DFCS budget. She stated this program will provide one time yearly a fifty dollar assistance with rent or utilities if there is a jeopardy of the utilities being disconnected or if there is a jeopardy of the person being evicted because lack of rent. They do have to have everything paid on the past due amount except for fifty dollars. She stated at that time, once they determine that is the case from bills and receipts that they provide, then they will assist with another fifty dollars to keep them from being evicted or their utilities being turned off. This program will also buy emergency medication for people in the community that do not have resources to buy that medication. She stated one time a year they will pay fifty dollars to help. Last year in 2014, this fund spent \$18,486.00 in indigent care for people who were being evicted or who were going to have their utilities turned off. She stated that as a homeowner in Floyd County she would hate to see her taxes go up, but as a social worker and someone who cares greatly about their community, she also knows that sometimes the health of the community is determined by how well they treat their poor. Floyd County has a wonderful reputation of being a very caring and loving community. She would hate to see that end, so she will forgo her homeowners pleasure at a tax increase and say if that is what it takes to continue taking care of these people in the future, then she is all for it. She stated please as they consider the millage rate consider these folks. She also brought some information

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about the programs for the Board. She stated she wanted to be sure to do that since they have not provided any information to them this year on the programs, what they have done, how many people they have served, and the demographics of the people that they served. She thanked the Board.

**John Pillsbury, 106 East Valley Road**, stated he is very pleased to be in the Rome, Georgia area. He stated he grew up on a dairy farm, and learned early the value of hard work. They are fortunate in Rome and Floyd County to have leaders in government who do just the same thing, and they appreciate it. He stated they have excellent employees in the city and county providing solid leadership. He thanks them for their efforts, and he thanks the Board for their efforts. He stated his early farm experience taught him how to plant and care for crops to get the maximum results. They have to do the same in government. He stated they are located in a wonderful area of Georgia about in the center of the ABC triangle. They are fortunate to have a great mix of industry, education, medical, retail, a wonderful downtown, and a river right in the downtown area to make great place to live. They have a valuable infrastructure already in place for existing and new development. He stated right now, they are not doing all they should do to maintain and improve that infrastructure. Their city and county governments have done an excellent job over the last several years in reducing costs. He stated they have kept the millage rate nearly constant over that time. It is now to the point that they need to make an addition to the mileage rate to provide necessary funding for their county government. He stated fewer roads are being paved than needed, the equipment is used longer than normal, and maintenance is delayed. This will result in higher cost later with these delays. Maintenance and up keep of the buildings owned and operated by the county are also important, and should not be put off to cut costs. It does not do any good as it only makes the costs higher later. He stated salaries have not been increased and they have lost many qualified, trained employees to nearby communities. This increases costs. They have not filled some necessary jobs in law enforcement, and this could affect safety down the road. He stated it is time for all of them to open the door to assist our county officials in passing the increase mileage rate needed. They can work together to provide the needed finances to support their county employees, maintain and improve their infrastructure, have a safe place to live and work, and make things better for all of them in the future. He stated as his background taught him, a team works better going in the same direction. Let us join the commission team and county officials to go in the right direction. He stated that he is offering his limited support for the very reasonable proposed increase in the millage rate. He asks all of them (*citizens in attendance*) to do the same, and encourage others to support it. He thanked the Board for allowing him to speak.

**Thad Rush, 3853 Calhoun Road**, stated he is a life resident of this county. He is here to speak in opposition of the mileage rate. He stated he is not that aware of all the business in the world, but he knows they have this contingency fund, and he knows that they have to have it for their bond rating. His feeling is the debt that has come back on this tax refund should be repaid from the contingency fund. He stated if they would just think, how much of those tax dollars have they put in that contingency fund in the last ten years that was not theirs. He is totally opposed to a millage rate increase.

**Gerald Cagle, 462 Reynolds Bend Drive**, stated they read in the newspaper where it talks about what the taxes would be on a \$100,000.00 house, but you rarely hear anything about how it would affect the businesses in the county that create jobs for the county. When something happens unexpectedly in the business that he operates, he has to go to a reserved fund, or money he has put back. He stated if there is nothing there then he ends up borrowing it. Over the years, he has been fortunate to have a reserve. He asks the Board not to raise taxes on the individuals or the businesses. He stated vote no on the tax increase. He thanked the Board.

**W. M. (Bill) Fricks, 2101 Village Boulevard**, stated it is good to be here with them, and he would like to thank them for allowing him a couple of minutes to speak on the taxes. He stated he would also like to tell the Board what a great job they are doing, he is proud of them. He stated they have kept their community attractive to new residents and businesses too, and he thanks them for that. They are now faced with a difficult decision on what to do about some badly needed funding. He knows that the Board has tried very hard and exhausted every source of their needs to no avail. He stated he read that they are considering a slight increase in the millage rate to meet these needs. He was told that the proposed amount would be \$33.00 dollars on a \$100,000.00 home. If they break that down, it comes to \$.09 cents a day. He stated if this small increase would get them back on track, it looks like an excellent solution for their needs. If so, he hopes that they will vote yes for the proposed amount, and move on to greater things and greater achievements for the future. He thanked the Board for their time, and stated God bless them all and their county.

**Alvin Jackson, Sr., 23 Conn St**, stated he is here today to support the tax increase. He stated personally he thinks it should have been done long ago and they would not be standing here now. He has lived here all his life. He stated he is a business owner, a taxpayer, and he owns several pieces of property throughout Rome and Floyd County. He has not seen, in his lifetime, his bills go down. He stated everything from his cable bill to the food that he serves has gone up. They have a lot of good people in Rome and Floyd County. He stated he has noticed over the last seven to eight years, from law enforcement to Parks and Recreation, they have been forced to cut their budgets. You are asking people to do more with less. He stated many of them being businessmen they know that sometimes they have to make tough decisions. They have to do something outside the box; they have to think outside the box. He stated if they are in a business, some things that they do not want to do like pass the cost on to customers, they have to do it in order to stay in business. He would like to say to them today, they have services here in Rome and Floyd County. The many different programs that they have and the quality of life they have become used to is in jeopardy. He stated if they do not do this increase now,

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what are they going to do six months from now, a year from now. What are they going to do when the draw down the rainy day fund. He stated, as he understands it, a certain percentage or a certain amount of money is supposed to stay in that rainy day fund to give them some type of bond rating. What happens when they get below that. He asked what happens if they, as their community leaders, do not have the courage to raise taxes. He thinks \$33.00 on a \$100,000.00 home is a mere increase. He stated it just sounds senseless to him; it is a no brainer. He supports the Board if they will raise those taxes. Do it now because the longer they wait the worse it is going to get. He stated they are jeopardizing their safety by not raising the funds of their law enforcement. He cannot understand why it has to be like that. He stated if they noticed in, he thinks it was Sunday's news, Bartow County actually pays their sheriff's officers, and they are recruiting. They are very smart, and they are business people. He stated he would let Floyd County train them too, and then lure them away with a higher salary. That is how business goes; that is the way it is. He stated they are losing a lot of good quality people here. This is beginning to be a serious problem. He stated they have asked all of these departments to do more and more. They are not giving them any incentive; they are not raising their pay. He asked how would they feel if it was them. He stated how would they feel if they had to feed their family, or if they were in law enforcement and went out late at night working a job that really cannot support their family, so they have to moonlight. He asked them to put themselves in these people's shoes. He stated him for one, and he thinks there are a lot of people that he has talked to that support this. Go ahead, do what they are supposed to do, and they will not be coming back here next year talking about the same thing. He thanked the Board.

**Bob Sapp, 3 Faith Drive, Silver Creek**, stated first of all, he is going to chime in with a couple of the other folks. He stated that he has had the honor and privilege to work with the Board, but he is not here as a jail administrator or a representative of the Sheriff's Office. He is here as just himself representing his neighbors, his friends, his part of the community, his children, and his grandchildren to say these things. He would like to thank the Board. He stated he has seen them working, seen them making these hard decisions and he really appreciates each one of them for that. They are a strong team sitting up there. He stated he refers to them often as the vital few. The property tax issue, he is having a hard time sitting in his seat back there because people are talking about they are going to vote for them next time, and so on and so forth. He does not know why anyone would want to make it a political football. He stated it was never designed to do that. It was simply designed to help their community have the resources and the funding necessary to buy the services that the citizens, including him, expect. He stated it was never meant to be a political football, or to be used that way. Simply put it is just a formula for funding government. He stated that is all property tax is. Thank goodness that they have it. He stated they have to provide the fundamentals such as roads, water, utilities, infrastructure, and libraries. He was talking to a lady the other day that was really missing some of the services that the library offered, and because she works so many part-time jobs, she could not get her children over there at certain times for certain programs. He stated it just affects people that they do not realize it affects in big ways sometimes. He stated they need these fundamentals and the list is just endless of what they have to come up with to pay for this community. While many people have spoken against the tax, and some have spoken for it, he is definitely for raising the millage rate. He stated the Board has been safeguarding the taxpayer budget in Floyd County, he has been here for forty years, and he thinks for the last seven or eight they have not even talked about raising the millage rate. He commends them for having the courage to face it, and he thinks now is the right time. He stated they have done everything they can do. They have cut the fat, they have cut the meat, and they are down to the bone. He stated if they were making soup, it would just be bone soup because there is nothing left. He knows that because he has to help handle the budget here, and he will speak to that as a jail administrator. They have to work together to just make ends meet. He stated the Board needs their help, and he stands here to tell that there are a lot of folks in this community that support them tonight.

He stated they say liars may figure, but figures never lie. He is not sure exactly what the percentage is, but fifty to sixty percent of their roads need work badly, and Public Works is out there working with a million dollars less money in their budget in 2015 than they were back in 2008. He stated that as a simple mathematical equation that does not make sense. Nothing else has gone down. He stated they are paying more for milk, they are paying more for eggs, and they are paying more for asphalt and rocks. He has come to all of the meetings, and he listens to everyone talk. He stated he knows that the Board will keep the facts in front of them. Even if they do raise the property taxes, which he certainly hopes they do, they would still be the second lowest millage rate in northwest Georgia if they raised it a full mill, and that is the facts. He stated that is all he has to say except again, thanks for everything that they do. They should be commended for everything they do, and it is time that the citizens just roll their shirtsleeves up to help them. He stated he is for the tax.

**David Doss, 806 Collinwood Road**, stated about twenty-five years ago or so he had the pleasure of sitting in their very seat. He stated this is the probably the second meeting of the County Commission that he has been to in twenty-five years, and he probably would not be here now had he not run into County Manager McCord at lunch today. He really felt compelled come offer them his support. He stated he has been in that seat, and he knows how tough it is. He knows what a thankless job being on the County Commission is. He stated they work their tail off; they get a whole bunch of criticism, very little support, and very few kind words. He felt compelled to come and tell them that today. He stated he wants to support them; he wants to tell them that seven years of little or no growth in the digest, seven years of little or no growth in the budget, and seven years of budget cuts, they just cannot continue to do that. One of the most foolish traps to fall into is the trap that they can somehow cut their way to prosperity. Well, ladies and gentlemen, they cannot do that. He stated the best example as he told County Manager McCord, he bets that he has not been to Cedartown in five years, and if they have not been to Cedartown in a while, they should get in the car and ride down there

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because that is where some of the folks in this room want to take Floyd County. With all due respect to the good folks that live in Polk County and Cedartown, downtown Cedartown is one of the most pathetic, depressing places that he has ever been. He stated he would say that ninety percent of the buildings in downtown Cedartown on Main Street are vacant. Industry has left; Cedartown should just call a meeting, throw in the cards, say they are done, and disband. He stated it is a sad place. The reason for that is they lack the leadership to do what it took to keep Cedartown and Polk County moving forward. He stated they have ignored their infrastructure; they have ignored what it did to attract industry in that town and they are bearing the fruits. This community, this county, this government, city and county, cannot continue to cut the library. He stated it cannot continue to cut Public Works. He can tell them from his days on the Department of Transportation (DOT) the state used to pave ten percent of the roads every year so that in ten years they had paved every road in the state of Georgia. He stated by the time he left, they were down to four percent. They are now down to about two and a half percent. He stated he is telling them, when they get behind that eight ball, they cannot catch up. They cannot continue to cut Public Works, the county police, and the Sheriff's Office. He stated they cannot continue to cut the sexual assault center, and Harbour House. All of these things are what has made Rome and Floyd County one of the best communities in this state to live in. He stated nobody likes higher taxes, but he will tell what, nobody in this room wants to be the next Cedartown; trust him.

He stated he has heard that the fund balance is the most responsible solution. Well, not if it damages their credit rating and their bond rating. He stated the Board knows the numbers better than any of them in that room does. If they have a surplus fund balance that is more than what is required to maintain their fund balance, use it, but as he understands their fund balance is below what is required and they are treading on thin ice about to lose their bond rating. He had just as soon not do that. He stated he would not call that fiscally responsible. People of this great community elected the members of the Board to lead them forward, not lead them backward. He stated he asked that those in this room that bark the loudest and want to threaten them by the next election not intimidate them. He will tell them this, he will stand shoulder to shoulder with any of them who do the responsible fiscal thing and move this county forward. He stated he appreciates their hard work for the last seven years because he knows how painful it is to make the cuts that they have already made. They have cut the fat, they have cut the muscle, and they have cut the bone. He stated it is time to do what so many of the other folks have said that they do not like to take a dose of bad medicine, but sometimes they have to do it. He is here to urge them to move this county forward, and he will support them a hundred percent of the way. He thanked the Board.

**Diane Tally, 414 Robin Hood Rd,** stated she would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to come here tonight to address the issues. She stated she would be brief; she will just make a few observations, and end with a question. If there has to be a property tax increase, she likes point five mills better than one mill. She stated the people of Floyd County were told if the last SPLOST did not pass, they would see an increase on their property taxes; it passed. It is a rainy day in Floyd County, and there is more than one storm on the horizon so why not use that rainy day fund. She stated the money taken from the rainy day fund can be replaced, but a tax increase goes on for whenever. She would like to encourage them to listen to Mr. Bagby. She stated she had thought about saying that earlier in the day, and she thought no, she would not say that, but she wishes they would get with the city commissioners. She knows that the mayor and several of those at the meeting at the fire station talked about checking into. She stated that just does not make a lot of sense to her that they are told they are not going to receive sales tax that they send down there in good faith and they do not tell them anything. That is not good business, and it is certainly not good government. She stated maybe they (*the Board*) will join with them (*the city*) to check that out. She will end by saying as a small businessperson, they are having to deal with insurance issues. That is ninety-five percent of their business. She stated with the onset of advantage plans, Medicaid, and that sort of thing, a lot of times what they get from their customers insurance companies will barely pay their costs. What they have had to do is some creative financing and some creative purchasing because they could not raise their insurance premiums, or tell their insurance company how much to pay. She stated it is what it is. They send them a code, and they send them whatever they approve to pay for that. She stated her question is, what can Floyd County expect to see as a result of paying more in property taxes. She does not expect an answer tonight. She thanked the Board for allowing her to speak.

**Elaine Watson, 2311 Village Boulevard,** stated she has some observations she would like to share. She stated she has always thought that a Politian raising taxes was the easiest thing to do. Once she mentioned to a County Commissioner, why not put a detailed budget online, ask the public to read it, and offer suggestions for cuts. She stated to her that would be a win-win for the commissioners and for the public. The commissioners would be showing the public that they are telling them everywhere the money was spent, and the public, by offering suggestions, would have some input with how their tax money is spent. She stated that she does not know about all of the departments, but there is one county department that she has observed, and some of the employees work with the public. Many a time, she has been up to that department and they are sitting around reading magazines. She stated does not know about any of them, but she has never had a job where she can sit and read a magazine. There is always something to do. She stated she has talked this over with other people, and it is somewhat disheartening to know that they are paying a salary and they are sitting around reading magazines. It is her understanding that the rainy day fund is used for emergency, and she thinks that they are in an emergency. She stated she would like to ask each commissioner if they want the rainy day fund to be spent to pay for this to publicly state why, and then those commissioners who do not want the rainy day fund to be spent for this, but want to raise taxes to publicly state why individually. She thanked the Board.

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**Heather Piles, 2602 Lakeview Drive**, stated she is a wife and mother of three children. She stated her husband has been with the Sheriff's Office for eight years, and changing jobs for another county job. For those eight years, she saw her husband tired from working two jobs, and like other officers working up to three jobs to provide for their families. She stated every year they watched their insurance go up and the pay decrease, so with no pay raises, they could not keep up with economy. These dedicated officers and firefighters put themselves last to put community first. She stated they are educated, have degrees, and they have struggled long enough. She is all for raising the millage rate because their dedicated officers need their raises, and other county areas need their raises also. She thanked the Board.

**Marylin Hunt, 21 Riverview Road**, stated she is President of the Friends of the Library. She stated she would like to speak to them for two reasons. First, to support those who have said to improve the millage rate. She stated go ahead and tax them. Are they going to like it, no, but they cannot continue paying if they do not all chip in. She stated liked what was mentioned by someone; they were warned about that with the SPLOST fund. She and County Manager McCord have done business. She stated she was a thorn in his flesh for many years. She told him next time they have a SPLOST to send her around the county and she would raise it. She stated it dawned on her that they have been asking them (*the Board*) to support the library. She does not even know what their concept of the library is. She knows what her concept was. It is a place where they go and get books; you check them out, read them, and return them. She stated if they are late, they have to pay a due. After she became President of the Friends of the Library and she volunteered for twenty-five years, had book sales and gift shops, she happened to notice they sign an agreement that they have two rooms at the library at no cost. She stated their purpose is to support them, but she did not know what the library had become. She challenged them to learn what she learned. She asked do they know that the Nature Conservancy has an office in the Floyd County Library. She thinks that is cool. She stated it is because of Marshall Forest. They have English as a second language. She thought that it was probably going to be South Americans. She had no clue the number of people from different countries who were better educated than she is who were going to English as a second language. She stated they might have been professors in their country but they could not speak English, and they are over here learning in their library. There is a literacy program at the library. She stated a friend of hers helped a man learn enough on the back of a box of instant potatoes that he made instant potatoes by himself for the first time in his life. There is a quilting club that meets there, and there are business meetings held in those rooms. She stated she was Director of the Center for Adults with Developmental Disabilities for thirty-five years, and they had many meetings here at the library. Those rooms were full. She stated there is a summer children's reading program, and there are puppet shows. There are weddings held there. She also went to a memorial service at the Floyd County Library. She stated it was for a dedicated volunteer, and that is where she wanted her memorial service. There are students from all over Floyd County who come to those beautiful gardens to have their prom pictures made. She stated the number of people who come in and out of that building makes it not a library; it is a community center. She does not think they realize that yet. She stated that she did not realize it until this year. She has a feeling it will not be long before it will be the community center. She stated the civic center is good in its purpose, but they cannot have more than one meeting there. The Forum is nice, but not everyone can afford it. She stated she is trying to sway their concept of the library because she believes that they have been asking them to support something that they might not realize just what all is involved. Now go home and think about it. She thanked the Board.

Chairman Maxey asked is there anyone else who would like to speak at this time. Seeing none, he declared the Public Hearing closed, and asked if there is any discussion among the Board, or a motion to suspend the meeting. Commissioner Hancock made a MOTION to suspend the meeting to enter into Caucus. SECOND by Commissioner Wallace.

Commissioner Bagwell stated he feels that they should remain in the Community Room and have their discussion out in the open in front of the public rather than suspending the meeting to enter into Caucus. Commissioner Hancock stated the motion to enter into Caucus was not made with the intention of closing out the public; the purpose behind it was to provide a more suitable area for the Board to fully engage with each other during their discussion. He stated the Caucus would be open to the public, and anyone wishing to join them could do so; they are not attempting to hide anything. Commissioner Bagwell stated there is limited space in the Caucus Room, and it would not accommodate everyone who has taken time out of their schedule to attend the meeting this evening. He stated again, he just strongly feels that it is necessary to remain in the Community Room where there is plenty of room for everyone, especially since what they are discussing directly affects the citizens of Floyd County. Following the decision of the Board to continue discussions without suspending the meeting, MOTION to suspend the meeting to enter into Caucus was withdrawn by Commissioner Wallace, and SECOND was withdrawn by Commissioner Hancock.

Commissioner Wallace stated she would like to make a couple of comments and an observation just to clarify. She stated they have heard from several people speak about the rainy day fund, and how much money is in the rainy day fund. She asked County Manager McCord to sort of explain to the public what the rainy day fund is, how much money they currently have in the rainy day fund, and how they put money in the rainy day fund.

County Manager McCord stated he thinks the rainy day fund is a little misleading. He stated the rainy day fund is their general fund balance at the end of the year, which would be ending December 31. Their fund balance at the end of 2014 was \$14.7 million; that has been the amount of money they have discussed

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going forward. He stated they do have a deficit budget this year of about \$1.2 million originally with the changes in the sales tax, which they also receive monthly payments from sales tax although they did not receive one this month. They do typically receive between six and seven hundred thousand dollars in local option sales tax with their primary source of revenue though being sales tax. He stated it all applies to their operations and their fund balance, but that fund balance is not a liquid account. It is not a cash balance in the bank. He stated as of last Friday, they have \$1.9 million in cash fund balance in the bank. They do not have \$14 million. He stated that at the end of the 2014, they had \$14 million; now with the \$1.2 million original deficit plus the adjustment for sales tax, they are projecting just over \$12 million. That ties back into some of the comments about bond ratings and percentage of operating funds that they have to have on hand. He stated now, that does not mean that they cannot borrow money, it is just something that this Board has chosen not to do recently. They have done that in previous years, but he thinks it has been a long time since they chose to borrow money or do tax anticipation notes to cash flow operation until taxes start coming in October or November; some may actually come in as soon as bills go out. He stated they are really at their lowest point of cash currently, in August and September, until tax payments start coming in for the year. The magic number for them has been \$12 million of general fund balance for them not to have to borrow money. He stated a couple of years ago they got pretty close to having to borrow money; they got down well below \$100,000.00 in the general fund reserves. He hopes that he has answered their question that it is not \$14.7 million in cash that they do not use. They operate on those funds throughout the year for payroll and whatnot. He stated they are \$1.9 million down, and as of this Friday, they will be about \$1.2 million after their payroll goes out. It does creep down especially this time of year, and then with the hit with the sales tax, that is what has put them in the position that they are currently in.

Commissioner Fricks stated one thing he might want to elaborate on is he thinks they have heard that he is the biggest one that preaches fund reserve on the Board. He stated to give them a little history, when he came on board their millage rate was 10.86 mills and their fund balance was \$3.2 million. The first year he worked on a budget they were challenged because they could only balance a budget up to the amount of what their fund reserve was. He stated they started working very hard to try to add on to that fund reserve. One thing they do is that they work on borrowed money until the first of November when they collect taxes. He stated he remembers thinking that was a little bit of a surprise to him when he came on the commission, so they worked hard as a team to start building their fund reserve in order to could eliminate that. One thing he is proud to say is the benefits of that in the very first year during the high interest rates, the difference that it created was \$900,000.00 in interest saved and interest earned. He stated that was \$900,000.00 of revenue generated just because they did not borrow money. That affected him substantially at that time; he made a personal pledge at that time that they would maintain a fund reserve. He stated they built it up to as much as \$21 million, and if they look at the history of the past years that he has been here, they lowered the taxes three years because their fund reserve was as strong as it was. Now they are in a situation where they may potentially have to borrow money. He stated they are very close to doing that.

He stated another thing he worked hard on was trying to get their bond rating up. He stated he went to Moody's and had the biggest education he ever had in his whole life presenting their financial strength to try to get their bond rating increased, and they did. The only reason they could do that was because of the strength of their fund reserve and the strength of their financial abilities in the county. He stated he is really passionate about this fund reserve. One of the things he will do is he will have to raise taxes when it is necessary because he is too passionate about going into the fund reserve. He stated he does not want to see them go back in the hole. He calls it the landslide. He stated as soon as they do that, they start paying interest, they start losing the interest that they earned on their balances, they start digging a hole, and they lose revenue. Then they have to make up that revenue, so it is a landslide. He stated since he has been on the Board he does have a history of he thinks three years that he decreased taxes, four years he has increased, and six years he has left it alone leaving it stable. It is almost two mills lower than it was when he came on board, so he hopes they do not think he does not try to do and work as hard as he can to maintain a low millage rate because he does. They have worked very hard. He stated they have never been faced with the challenges that they have had over the last seven years. Used to they would have trends of decreased revenue, that was a year and they could bridge that without impacting taxes with increases and stuff like that, but these last seven years they have had a flat rate and a deduction of almost \$5 million in revenue that they have dealt with. He stated they have hurt different programs, they have hurt different systems, but they have done that in order to maintain the same millage rate that they have. They have struggled and worked hard to do that. He stated at this point in time, challenged with a bunch of different things, they have put off some of the things that they need to do to make improvements. He always likens this to budgeting their household. He stated when they put off replacing the roof until they have to get it roofed or the house will fall apart. He thinks they are at that stage. He stated they have to patch up some of the things that they have. They cannot fix everything in one year, but he thinks that they are going to have to challenge themselves, and unfortunately increase the taxes in order to fix those issues. He stated the hardest thing he has ever done in his whole life is raise taxes because he knows how challenging things are for people out there right now in terms of their households. In the last few years, he has read the foreclosures, and he has talked to people who are challenged in their budget. He stated he does not want to do it, but he also has to be fiscally responsible for Floyd County, and he has to try to work on that and try to maintain that fund reserve because that is one of the pledges that he made to himself. He added that is a bit of a long speech he made there, but he is passionate about it

Commissioner Hancock stated he would just like to answer Ms. Watson's question. He stated that he is on the same side with Commissioner Fricks as far as the reserve fund. There is a huge misconception

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about how much fund balance they actually have on hand, that they can grab ahold whenever they need it. He stated it is just like when they budget their household budget; if they have to dip into their savings account, they always have a plan of putting that money back in there. He does think it is fiscally responsible to dip into their reserve fund without a plan to put the money back in there, and just continue over the years like they have done in past to dip into. He stated it continues to go down and they have no plan to build it back up or to put it back at a reasonable number, which that number is at \$12 million. He would like to commend the commissions before him because he would like to give them (*the public*) some numbers that County Manager McCord put together for them (*the Board*). He stated they have eliminated forty-eight positions since 2008, so he wants them to know that there has been fat cut. It is not a point that the Board in the past has not done anything; they have done a great job to try to bring them through some very difficult times. He stated and their roads, they used to pave forty miles of road a year. They averaged rotating every twenty years. He asked do they know now that they pave an average of fourteen miles a year of their county roads, and they are on a fifty-year turn around. He stated that means that every fifty years they will pave a road, so if they pave it this year, fifty years from now is their projections on repaving that road. That is due to not having the funding to be able to pave. He stated when he ran for office he was always asked if he would raise taxes, and he always said every time if it affected the health and wellness of their community, the safety of their public, and their infrastructure, then he would consider raising taxes. Being within this right now, he feels like they are at that point. He stated they are not at that phase, he does not want to bring gloom and doom because it is not the end of the world, but they do need to start doing something to prepare for the future. That was another thing he ran on; building the county for the future. He stated if they take pond water, and they just leave it there, it grows stagnant. He was always taught that if they throw a rock in a pond and it has a ripple in front of it, in order to be successful they have to stay in front of that ripple, catch it, and know what is coming instead of sitting back and watching it go right on by, which is the position they are in. He stated that is his position, and as far as answering Ms. Watson's question, he does not mind dipping into the reserve fund, and he has told several people that, but he does not want to dip in there without having a plan of putting that money back. Right now, if they dip completely into that reserve fund to dig them out of this hole it would not be good for them, whether it is Department of Revenue or whether it is salary increases. He stated and his reason for doing this has nothing to do with salary increases; his reason has to do with the infrastructure of their community, the quality of life, and to be able to bring economic development here to keep the standard they have already set. That is where his main concern and his main focus is on the issue. He stated he does believe, as Mr. Bagby stated, that they do need to join forces and work together to try to change the laws. The Department of Revenue did what the law states to do, so regardless of what the county says, they took their money, and they are going to continue until they get their money, but that is the law. He stated that is not the Department of Revenue; legislation does that. What they have to do is work to change the law in order to be successful. He stated that is just his opinion.

Commissioner Bagwell stated he would like to commend everyone that spoke tonight and for coming to the meeting. He stated that is big because they do not have this many people at their meetings, and it shows the community support for what they are doing whether they raise the millage rate or do not raise it. That is good to have their people come and tell them what they think. He stated he offers a different opinion about raising the millage rate. To answer Ms. Watson's question, he thinks that they should dip into their reserve. He stated the hole that they are in right now is mainly because the Department of Revenue has dealt them a \$1 to \$1.2 million reduction in sales tax payments. He does not feel that they should raise the millage rate to cover that. He stated he would like to thank everyone for their hard work on this issue; they (*the Board*) appreciate them, and they all agree on that. They all (*the Board*) get along, and he thinks that they are committed to balancing the stability of the county. He stated that is their number one goal. They may go at in a different direction, he may vote against the millage rate increase, but the bottom line is this county will remain financially stable. He stated they could do that with or without a tax increase. He would like to reiterate about the raises, that \$1 million is what they spent in the last three years, which is a significant amount of money that they invested in their employees, and they do care about them. Not only did they provide a flat rate increase for all eligible employees in 2013, they also included a 1% increase for all employees with a \$500.00 increase for certain employees in the 2014 budget, as well as a \$500.00 COLA increase for all full-time employees in June of this year, which is four raises in three years. He stated to come up here and say that they have not given any raises; he does take exception to that. He would also like to tell the public on the pauper burials, they have never refused to bury someone that cannot afford it in this county. He stated as long as he is on the commission, he will never support anything other than taking care of their needy. Commissioner Fricks stated he actually asked the numbers on that the other day. He stated it was kind of interesting that he did that because he knew that they used to have about fourteen, but he thinks the numbers have increased up to thirty-four or thirty-seven. He does not think that they have had any cuts in that area that he is aware of; he thinks that they have actually increased that budget over the last few years because the numbers have increased. Commissioner Bagwell stated he thinks that Commissioner Fricks is correct, that total budget number has increased. He stated he would also like to point out that their public safety budget amount has increased. That is the one department that they have not cut whatsoever. He stated they have really dumped more money into their public safety. That is something he prides them on as a county. He stated they do have good public safety from their jail to their prison to their county police; of course the whole nine yards, and they have increased the amount of money that they do spend there.

Commissioner Wallace stated she also wanted to make a couple of notes just for the public so they would know all of the information they (*the Board*) have as far as their revenue. She stated this is revenue reduction since 2008. Their Magistrate Court fees are down four percent since 2008, their Probate Court fees

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are down thirty-two percent since 2008, and their boarding inmates line item is down sixty-eight percent, which is a \$1.16 million decrease. She stated their local option sales tax is down thirteen percent, their jail surcharge revenue is down thirty-seven percent, and then another factor, as Commissioner Fricks addressed a little bit earlier, in 2008 they received \$1.5 million in interest and in 2014, it was \$72,000.00. She wanted to let them know that it is not just one area of the county and of their community that is down in revenue. She stated it is all of these places. Their court systems, boarding inmates, local option sales tax; they are experiencing decreases in their budget in all of these things. Chairman Maxey stated one of the major things, and he did not support it, but they have lost over a million dollars in their energy excise tax that they pay to certain select large industries. He stated before that, he thinks that is a very serious mistake in that they lost a million dollars that they could have had that they (*the industries*) were paying under energy excise tax. He stated he believes they as commissioners are going to be held accountable for that, and he thinks they need to realize that that is where a lot of their money has gone. Not only what the state has done to them, they have done some of this to themselves because of some of the choices they have made along the way. Of course, that is just his opinion. He stated they are having discussion among the Board, so he would like to be sure that they keep that discussion among the Board. They are talking to the general public. He stated they are not trying to justify their actions to anyone but themselves.

Commissioner Wallace asked County Manager McCord if he would tell them one more time, currently she knows they have \$1.2 million in their fund balance as of this Friday after payroll, is that correct. County Manager McCord stated yes, that is correct. He stated their cash balance as of last Friday is \$1.9 million, and they will have about a \$700,000.00 payroll this coming Friday, which will put them at approximately \$1.2 million. Now, there is some other money in the general fund. He stated one fund would be their health fund, which is restricted because of their health insurance fund and how they are self-insured, but they will be in the \$1.2 to \$1.3 million range next week. Commissioner Fricks stated he thinks bond covenants is thirty-five percent, if he is right. County Manager McCord stated thirty to forty percent is the range. Commissioner Fricks stated he knows they have been as high as forty percent and they have been as low thirty. He stated in their opinion letter from their auditors last year, it was referenced that they needed to work to maintain their bond rating, and that they needed to address their depleting fund reserve. County Manager McCord stated at the end of 2013, the one negative comment he guesses they would call it was that they had a trend of four out five years where they had reduced their fund balance though it did go up one year too, which sort of made up for it by some refinancing that they did. He stated that was the one negative in 2013. In 2014, they were right in the middle at thirty-five percent. He stated that is really good, but there again, they move to this year and the current projection would be \$2.6 million that they ended the year on. Commissioner Fricks stated he thinks each and every one of them have always heard him harp on fund reserve since they have been on the Board with him. He stated it is one of those things that he is passionate about keeping. He remembers when they paid that interest, and it was tough, which is why he is so hard about not interrupting the fund reserve. He stated he knows that they can trickle away at it, and they could probably make it another year potentially, but if they do what is projected right here they would actually be out of covenants of their bond rating because of the sales tax hits and everything. He does not like what they are considering here; it is not one of those things that he likes to even talk about though he thinks they have put it off as long as they possibly could. He stated eight years of depleting revenues is going to take the best out of them. If he does support the millage rate increase, which he intends on doing, he will pledge to do as they have done before when an increase was approved to reduce taxes once they start building their fund balance. He stated it is not his intent to accumulate funds to the point that they have built a powerhouse here at Floyd County so they do not have to worry about it. His intentions are to avoid paying interest on their operational fund and to be as frugal with their money as they possibly can. He challenged each and every one of the commissioners to continue to do that; be as frugal as they possibly can and to look for those revenue cuts because he thinks that is what they are going to have to do to survive in this economy as it is right now.

Commissioner Bagwell stated he agrees with Commissioner Fricks about protecting their fund balance, but again, the fund balance according to their bond rating and how they are rated is a percent of their fund balance, of their total budget, and total expenditures. He stated if they will look, back in 2008, they are a whole lot greater than they are right now due to the cuts that they have made therefore, the percentage of the amount of fund balance in dollars would not be as great as what they have had; that way the percentage is not going to go below. They have been lower in previous years than what they would project to go this year without a millage rate increase. He stated in 2011, they were down to 13.22 with that percentage. They need to compare it to the percent of their total budget this year. Commissioner Fricks stated everyone on the Board knows that he has been quiet the past week because one thing he has been doing is carrying around the audit report for a week, and every moment he had he would stick his nose in it to look at the trends over the past years, and how they bridged over different areas the times that they had challenges. He stated usually every year they had something they could pull; he called it rabbits out of the hat. They would refinance bonding and get a million in revenue. He stated one year they reimbursed from SPLOST on some projects and reduced their Public Works operational costs, which is the year shown in the report, two years ago, that they were able to add \$2 million back in their fund reserve because of that, but those are one time hits. He looked for a rabbit this year, and he thinks County Manager McCord has too along with everyone else on the Board. He stated he looked for a rabbit and he could not find one this year. He sees a trend going in the wrong direction. He stated that hopefully they would see that trend turn around. He thinks he and Commissioner Bagwell have discussed the digest and his guess that they are going to have digest growth. He stated his guess this year was that they were going to have more digest growth than they actually. It was flatter than he had anticipated. He stated his guess was that they were going to have a

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two percent increase in their digest. Years when they were adding to the fund reserve, they were having three and four percent increase in their digest. He stated he thinks they are seeing things turn around, but they are slow, and the hardest time to budget is when they are growing out of a recession, or growing out of a budget deficit. He thinks they have to be careful about how they spend because there are so many things that they have reduced and pulled back on over the last seven years. He stated they cannot fix them all in one year, but they have to start moving in the right direction.

Commissioner Hancock stated he agrees with Commissioner Fricks about the rabbit out the hat; there is no rabbit in the hat. He stated since 2008 there has been over \$4 million in SPLOST dollars added to their general fund, which is perfectly legal. If that money is left over they can use it to pay existing debt, but they do not need to balance their budget on the back of the SPLOST. He stated they need to do what is right, and for lack of a better word, man-up to do what is right for the citizens of Floyd County, and not do it based off political reasons, but do it because it is the right thing to do. Commissioner Bagwell stated he agrees with Commissioner Hancock to vote for the right thing to do, and he thinks the right thing to do is not to put this millage rate increase on their property owners, a small segment of their total overall revenue generators. Commissioner Hancock stated that is true; they also put in the money for the SPLOST as well. He stated at least it was okay to do it to \$4 million then, so what is the difference in that and raising the millage rate now. The tax base comes from the same people even though he knows a percentage of it comes from outside. He stated they cannot just bury their heads in the sand. Commissioner Bagwell stated SPLOST comes from the generation of one penny; a millage rate comes from a generation of taxing their property owners. He stated more importantly, if it is \$33.00 on a \$100,000.00 house, what about the industry such as the \$10 million, the \$15 million, the \$100 million, and the \$150 million industries. He asked what about the \$5 million small business owner. He stated it is going to affect them a little bit harder than \$33.00. That is his concern that they are going to affect the businesses, industry, and the commercial businesses that generate jobs for this community. He stated they do not want it to have a negative effect on them. Just to sum it up, the money that they took from SPLOST money they were conservative in budgeting. He stated he thinks it is good on their staff and the Board at that time that they were able to run the projects under budget and were able to return that to their general fund. If they had not, they would have been faced with raising property tax again on the select few of individual people of this county, that being property owners. He stated he thinks the penny generated by all is a great thing to do, and not put the burden just on a few people. Commissioner Hancock stated he agrees somewhat, but if they were going to give that money back, they should have gave the additional SPLOST funds back to the property tax owners instead of using it to balance their budget, and been responsible enough to raise the millage rate, which is what that millage rate is set for and that is what that tax digest is for. He stated as someone mentioned earlier, that tax digest is set there for them to create their budget with, not to use the SPLOST dollars. If they were going to do that they should have gave the SPLOST funds back to the people whenever they came in under their projects and been responsible enough to raise the tax back then whenever they needed to. He stated these industries, if they do not have the roads to bring their product in, it is not going to do them any good if they (*the county*) does not have the infrastructure in place, which is where those tax dollars go to. He understands the concern, but he does not want this to be a political jockeying in front of people. He stated he wants it to be because it is the right thing to. They do not need to be talking about they need to do this for the people. He stated everyone on this Board is for the people. Everyone in the Community Room was welcome to go into the Caucus Room; no one is trying to do anything different, he just feels that the millage rate is the right thing to do to continue to build the future for Floyd County. He stated he knows Commissioner Bagwell disagrees, and he understands his position, so he guesses they will agree to disagree.

Commissioner Wallace stated she personally respects each one of their opinions, but they are looking at based on what they have asked County Manager McCord, Finance Director/Comptroller Gary Burkhalter, and their staff to do is try to balance the budget when they are negative. She stated currently according to the revised budget they are \$2.6 million in the hole. She reiterated \$2.6 million is what they are in the hole based on the information they currently have. She stated she is not sure how much more pressure they can put on County Manager McCord, Finance Director/Comptroller Gary Burkhalter, and their staff to balance the budget and pay for the items and the services they want when they are not providing the funds. She wishes they had a different solution, and she does personally feel like the tax digest will increase. She stated she has heard from many people that they are beginning to see things improve, people are beginning to build houses, and she thinks that the digest over the next couple of years will increase, but what they have today is a deficit of \$2.6 million. She emphasized that is where they are today, a deficit of \$2.6 million. She stated if they raise the millage rate what they had proposed as being the maximum amount, it would only collect \$2.1 million, so they would still have to take money from their fund balance even if they raised it the maximum amount. They need to take that into consideration. She stated they have asked County Manager McCord since he has been on board as their County Manager to cut departments, and she thinks he continues to do that. Finance Director/Comptroller Gary Burkhalter and Assistant Finance Director Susie Gass have come along and been wonderful to help County Manager McCord, and they have cut everything they know to cut. She stated there are still cuts to be made, but probably not to the tune of \$2.6 million.

Chairman Maxey stated he thinks one of his big concerns is the fact that they are leading in the area on unemployment. He stated here in Floyd County, they have the highest unemployment rate; it is a growing unemployment rate, and they are losing jobs constantly. He is very concerned about their smaller industries where most of the new jobs are created. He stated he does not know of any that are doing extremely well. He believes they need to think about that, and how much of an affect this tax increase is going to be on

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their industry, their farmers, and so on. He stated they have a lot of forestry in their community. A tax increase would have a major impact on their forestry. He stated there are a lot of things they need to think about if they increase their taxes to a point where they drive industry out that would be making a mistake. He agrees that they need to balance their budget, but he is cautioning them to be careful about raising the millage rate this high. Commissioner Bagwell stated he would like to reiterate the fund balance is due to taxes taken in November, they pay their bills through December, and it is the amount left over to start the next year. He stated they do have enough cash money to cash flow and keep everyone paid until the taxes come in this year. They are in not in the position that they cannot pay their bills. He stated he thinks people have been lead to believe that, and that is just totally untrue. They do have enough to cash flow their operations until taxes come in. He stated they will dip into their rainy day fund if they do not raise the millage rate. It is there in dire needs, and they are not in an area that will affect their bond rating to put them in jeopardy there. He stated they have next year to look at their budget to see how their digest comes in, which is just him speaking on how he would handle it from a business standpoint.

Chairman Maxey asked if there is any further discussion among the Board. Hearing none, he called for a Motion. Commissioner Hancock made a MOTION to Approve and Authorize a Millage Rate Increase of 0.833 for a Rate of 9.600 Mills. SECOND by Commissioner Fricks.

Commissioner Wallace stated to clarify the motion; the motion is to raise 0.833, which is what they advertised as their maximum amount. She stated it is not one percent. It is less than one percent, but it is the maximum raise that they advertised. County Manager McCord stated that is correct. She stated and if they increase it by that, that will get them to \$2.1 million. County Manager McCord stated \$2.181 million is the projected increase in net taxes. VOTING:

Commissioner Wallace  
" Fricks

## Commissioner Bagwell

Commissioner Hancock

Chairman Maxey

## Motion Carried

**ADOPT RESOLUTION SETTING 2015 MILLAGE RATE FOR FLOYD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION M&O AND FLOYD COUNTY GOVERNMENT M&O, FIRE PROTECTION AND SOLID WASTE.**

County Manager McCord stated they would also be setting the recommended Floyd County Board of Education Millage Rate. He stated the millage rate provided by the Floyd County Board of Education for 2015-2016 is 18.580 mills per their board recommendation. The Fire Protection millage rate will be set at 1.669 mills, the Solid Waste millage rate for the unincorporated area only will be set at .664 mills, and the Floyd County Government M&O millage rate, per the motion that just passed, will be set at 9.600 mills.

Chairman Maxey called for a Motion. Commissioner Wallace made a MOTION to Adopt the Resolution Setting 2015 Millage Rate for Floyd County Board of Education M&O and Floyd County Government M&O, Fire Protection and Solid Waste as presented. SECOND by Commissioner Fricks. VOTING:

YES NO

Commissioner Wallace  
" Fricks  
" Bagwell  
" Hancock  
Chairman Maxe

### Motion Carried

**ADOPT RESOLUTION SETTING STREET LIGHTING ASSESSMENT FOR 2015 TAX YEAR.**

County Manager McCord stated adoption of this resolution would set the street light assessment at fifty-five (\$.55) cents per foot for tax year 2015. He stated this is not an increase, and would be the same amount that was approved in 2014. This is basically a pass through for street lighting. He stated if they (*the citizens*) have street lighting in their area, they (*the county*) pass through per their deed footage for the street that they live on.

Chairman Maxey called for a Motion. Commissioner Wallace made a MOTION to Adopt the Resolution Setting Street Lighting Assessment for 2015 Tax Year. SECOND by Commissioner Hancock.

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VOTING:

YES

NO

Commissioner Wallace  
" Fricks  
" Bagwell  
" Hancock  
Chairman Maxey

Motion Carried

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Board, MOTION was made by Commissioner Bagwell, SECOND by Commissioner Hancock, that the meeting be adjourned. VOTING:

YES

NO

Commissioner Wallace  
" Fricks  
" Bagwell  
" Hancock  
Chairman Maxey

Motion Carried

**FLOYD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**LARRY N. MAXEY, CHAIRMAN**