

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
JULY 24, 2025
9:00 AM
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Jessica Ward-Vice-Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, Ottice Amison, and Anthony Croom, Jr.

Others Present: Michele Maxwell-Clerk of Court, Linda Phillips-Finance Director, Michael Shuler-County Attorney, Michael Moron-County Coordinator, Erin Griffith-Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator, and Jessica Gay-Clerk to the Board

Call To Order

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Jones led the Board in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments

Mr. John Berry spoke to the Board via Zoom. He noted that he is more concerned about the expenditures that are going to be needed for the landfill, water management, fire control and EMS. He cautioned everyone to pay attention to the valuation of property. He noted the economic industry which is oysters has been set back and not sure when it will be back. He also noted that he is concerned about the EMS services. He asked the Board to please be sure those areas are being covered.

9:00 A.M.

Introductory Materials and Handouts

The Property Appraiser is required to certify to the County Commission the taxable value of real property by July 1st of each year. The certified value is the basis for calculating a proposed millage rate. I am pleased to announce Franklin County has an increase in taxable value of 9.34%. At this increase in value, one mill will generate \$3,785,787 in 2025. In the current budget, the millage rate of 5.2222 generated \$18,081,346. In the upcoming budget, the preliminary millage rate of 5.2849 would generate \$20,007,594. The rolled-back millage rate is the rate that nets the same ad valorem proceeds that a taxing authority operated on in the prior budget year (this considers the effect of the amount transferred to the tax increment district and omits the added value of new construction from the calculation). The rolled-back rate is 4.9131 and would generate \$18,599,954 in ad valorem proceeds – the preliminary millage 5.2849 with \$20,007,594 in property tax proceeds is currently 7.57% over the rolled-back rate or \$1,407,640 over in ad valorem proceeds. The total difference between budgeted property tax revenues from one year to the next excluding the effects of the tax increment districts and the value of new construction is \$1,926,248.

The preliminary budget totals \$113,354,234. The change in total budget can be attributed to the increases and decreases summarized on the next page and the creation of a new fund, fund 401, for the county Ambulance Service.

In 2025, Homesteaded Properties with just values exceeding taxable values, saw an increase in assessed value of 2.9% based on the Save Our Homes Cap Increase (which is the lesser of CPI or 3%). A homeowner with a house valued at \$150,000 with a \$50,000 homestead exemption would have paid \$522 in county taxes in 2025. At the proposed 2025 rate and the 2.9% adjustment to value (and the 2.9% growth on the 2nd \$25,000 homestead exemption), that homeowner would pay \$548 in county taxes.

Items that increased the operational budget (\$3,079,867) less those with decreases (\$2,032,498) result in a net increase that is approximately the difference in budgeted ad valorem proceeds. The summarized increases and decreases that make up for this difference from the 24/25 budget to the 25/26 budget are summarized in the table below.

REVENUE LOSSES / INCREASES TO THE BUDGET	AMOUNT
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT BUDGET INCREASE	\$1,226,268
PROPERTY APPRAISER BUDGET INCREASE	\$108,905
TAX COLLECTOR BUDGET INCREASE	\$82,899
CLERK OF COURTS BUDGET INCREASE	\$6,948
SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS BUDGET INCREASE	\$29,336
ANIMAL CONTROL BUDGET	\$47,651
PLANNING & ZONING BUDGET INCREASE	\$35,401
CODE ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT SERVICES - INCREASE IN LINE ITEM FOR HD ASSIST	\$20,000
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUDGET INCREASE	\$9,316
VETERAN'S AFFAIRS OFFICE	\$2,516
SENIOR SERVICES DEPARTMENT BUDGTET	\$42,281
EXTENSION OFFICE	\$2,175
NON-GOVT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS	\$9,563
AUDITOR FEE	\$3,000
CARRABELLE CRA - INCREASE IN TRANSFER OUT	\$16,654
BARNACLE PARKING DEVICE SUBSCRIPTION	\$21,500
TRIMPH FIRST RESPONDER COMMUNICATION SYSTEM - MATCH REQUIREMENT	\$25,000
ECONOMIC INCENTIVE PROGRAM MATCH FRANKLIN ED FOUNDATION FOR HANEY SITE	\$25,000
HEALTH INSURANCE (7.4% INCREASE & INS FOR NEW POSITIONS)	\$235,237
COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT 4% ALL EMPLOYEES	\$501,877
FRS RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION RATE INCREASE	\$74,304
INCREASE IN GENERAL FUND RESERVE FOR CONTINGENCY LINE ITEM	\$250,000
INCREASE IN TRANSFER TO ROAD & BRIDGE FUND	\$198,463
INCREASE IN TRANSFER TO MOSQUITO CONTROL FUND	\$5,573
INCREASE IN TRANSFER TO CAPITAL OUTLAY FUND	\$100,000
TOTAL COST INCREASES TO THE BUDGET	\$3,079,867
OFFSETS / REDUCTIONS TO THE BUDGET	AMOUNT
INCREASE IN STATE SHARED REVENUES & AD VALOREM OFFSET	\$1,019,459
REDUCTION IN TRANSFER OUT TO LIBRARY FUND	\$15,661
REDUCTION IN TRANSFER OUT TO MOSQUITO CONTROL FUND	\$15,327
ROAD DEPARTMENT BUDGET DECREASE	-\$3,078
TOTAL OFFSETS / REDUCTIONS TO THE BUDGET	\$1,047,369
TOTAL SUMMARIZED REVENUES LOSSES / INCREASES NET OFFSETS / REDUCTIONS TO THE BUDGET	\$2,032,498
Net Change Impacts Ad Valorem Proceeds 95%	\$1,935,712

Supplemental Attachments:

10 Year Millage Rate Comparison

Special note on taxable value: market high of 4.112 billion in taxable value with budgeted ad valorem proceeds of \$15,808,934 and 191 budgeted positions in fiscal year 2006/2007. 17 years later: 3.785 billion in taxable value with proposed ad valorem proceeds of \$20,007,594 and 197 full-time positions.

Chairman Jones noted the 4% raise for all employees was included in the proposed budget numbers.

Sheriff

Mrs. Ginger Coulter noted that she has provided some additional information for the Board's review. She noted that the Sheriff has requested a sizable increase and they have provided some data to back this increase. The total budget request is \$9,318,514 an increase of \$1,226,268 from last year's budget.

Chairman Jones noted that he understands what you are saying but we do not have the resources the State of Florida has. They have billions in reserve, and we do not. He noted that we are not the lowest one of the chart. Commissioner Ward noted that she knows law enforcement risk their lives every day, and in the position to do so, I would give them 30%. If we give the sheriff's office 15%, I believe we should give everyone across the other county departments and offices 15%. Commissioner Ward asked Mrs. Griffith what the cost would be to increase across the board. Mrs. Griffith noted that the cost would be approximately \$1,875,000. Commissioner Ward noted that this could possibly cause DOGE to investigate us if we increase our mill to the extent. Commissioner Ward noted that as a commissioner she wants to give everyone what we can. But we have some who live on a fixed income, and if we put that burden on them, we have to look at that too. We have to be mindful and be fiscally responsible. It is a difficult position to be in. She noted that with the increase from the state of 15%, that is a 30% raise. She noted that she believes if you get it, then everyone should. Mrs. Coulter noted that she does not disagree with her. Mrs. Griffith noted that this is a very busy time of the year and DOGE did extend the deadline for documents due by one week. She noted that she is afraid a lot of our programs that are not mandated by the state of Florida, she is not sure what the outcome of those programs will be. I am concerned for next year and we do not want to be on the side of the State of Florida to fund us because some of the programs may suffer. Commissioner Croom asked what happens if there is a reduction in property taxes. Mrs. Griffith noted that you all would have to make some difficult decisions and possibly pair some departments. You could possibly have to lay some people off. Commissioner Sanders noted that you have to look at essential and non-essential personnel. Mrs. Griffith noted that emergency management has received some cuts in the funding from state and federal levels. Commissioner Croom noted that he is supportive of first responders, and he approved the increase last year. He noted that he also has to look at the entire county employees. Commissioner Croom noted that we are looking at the healthcare and getting it more affordable. If recruitment and retention is our issue, then we need to start looking at the progressive pay structure or the bottom up. We need to look at increases those on the bottom or lower pay scale. Commissioner Croom asked what the right thing is right now. For me, the right thing is the 4% including you, to everyone. We have to be considerate of all of our departments. Mrs. Coulter noted that she understood, and she is here for her department. Chairman Jones noted that we are not going to take votes today but would like to have some discussion. Mrs. Chairman Jones asked what we need to do, do we need to have them resubmit this afternoon.

Commissioner Croom asked for Mrs. Griffith to explain the retirement increase. Mrs. Griffith noted that the retirement increases every July. The retirement rate stays the same in the budget forms and then I add it back in. It was a \$74,304 increase overall. The majority of that is the sheriff's department due to the special risk.

Commissioner Ward said constitutional offices are different than are others. They can divvy up how they see fit. Mrs. Griffith noted that the budget is built upon the previous request.

Commissioner Ward asked instead of buying a new truck or funds for vacant positions, can he use those funds to put towards raises. Mrs. Griffith noted that is permissible, it is not necessarily transparent, but it is his discretion what to do with the funding gap.

Chairman Jones asked if everyone is in agreement with the 4%. Commissioner Ward noted that we have to look at the big picture. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved 4 % raises across the board.

Property Appraiser

Mrs. Megan Shiver presented the proposed Property Appraiser's budget to the Board at \$1,000,348 an increase of \$108,905 from last year's budget.

Commissioner Ward noted that everyone seems to have increases in contractual services. Do they go out for contract or bids? Mrs. Griffith noted that this is for software, and it is sometimes specific. Mrs. Shiver noted that they did look for another software, and there was none out there. Chairman Jones asked about the bonus policy. It seems to me there was a discrepancy at some point and Mrs. Rhonda came back for additional funds. Mrs. Griffith noted that she believes this was for certifications. Chairman Jones noted that this budget does not include the 4% raises. Mrs. Griffith noted that she will go back and add those in from the county's budget.

Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Tax Collector

Ms. Link Carroll presented the proposed Tax Collector's budget to the Board at \$919,588 an increase of \$82,899 from last year's budget. Ms. Carroll noted that the bulk of the increase is the addition of a new employee and additional training. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Clerk of Courts

Commissioner Sanders asked if she was going to have someone from Carrabelle in the annex. Clerk Maxwell noted that she cannot justify paying someone to sit over there. Clerk Maxwell noted that she has had eight turnovers and mostly due to salary. She noted that if we had to have someone in Carrabelle full time, she would have to ask the Board for an additional FTE in order to fund it. Commissioner Croom asked how many employees the Clerk's office has. Clerk Maxwell noted that she has seventeen. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Supervisor of Elections

Mrs. Jennifer Duncan presented the proposed Supervisor of Election budget to the Board at \$618,927 with an increase of \$29,336. Mrs. Duncan noted that most of the increase is postage for mail outs, and IT services. The State is requiring some different things. Mrs. Griffith asked if the permanent part time position transitioned into full time. Mrs. Duncan confirmed that it did. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Road Department

Mr. Nabors presented the proposed Road Department budget to the Board at \$2,289,594.24 with a decrease of \$3,078. Chairman Jones asked if we are going to be able to address items on our capital improvement plan request in a timely manner. Mrs. Griffith noted that she thinks we will be okay. It looks like he will be paying off a piece of equipment in the year after next. Mr. Nabors noted that he has a few pieces of equipment that are 20-25 years old, it is costing us more to run and repair. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Solid Waste, Solid Waste Grant

Mr. Albert Floyd presented the proposed Solid Waste budget to the Board at \$1,727,500.72 with no increase. Mr. Floyd noted that he believes solid waste is fully staffed. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Mr. Albert Floyd presented the Solid Waste Grant budget to the Board at \$93,750. Mrs. Griffith noted that on the rebuild of the land field compactor. The cost of a new one is \$1.2 million, and \$568k for refurbishment. In the upcoming budget year, we will use a \$100k capital outlay. In the upcoming budget next year, the payments would come out of his budget. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Chairman Jones asked if this included the oil collection. \$2500 for the household waste round up? It is not covering the entire cost. Chairman Jones asked if we are using the entire \$20k? He noted that we should not be paying for the recycling. It should be under that DEP grant. There is \$20k a year available and we are only using \$8k? Mrs. Griffith noted that she will look into it.

Animal Control

Mr. Albert Floyd presented the proposed Animal Control budget to the Board at \$341,351 with an increase of \$47,651. He noted they are requesting one additional position. The additional position will allow more time in the field for the guys, and for more maintenance to be performed. Mrs. Griffith noted that we had set aside \$50k for repairs of the animal control building. In the upcoming year we have allocated \$150k for it. It should assist us with cleanliness issues. Mr. Floyd noted that we are having issues with plumbing. Chairman Jones asked if this would cover the cost of the new building. Mrs. Griffith noted that it will. We had a survey done and we are looking for a site to place this. Commissioner Croom tentatively approved.

Parks & Recreation

Mr. Albert Floyd presented the proposed Parks and Recreation budget to the Board at \$1,217,298 with no increase. He noted they have one vacant position available. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Mrs. Griffith noted that we have budgeted the funds for resurfacing the basketball court at Vrooman Park, Indian Creek Park playground structure, and damaged roof structure at Sylvester Park. Commissioner Ward noted that the problem is there is grass that grows through the cracks. Commissioner Sanders asked him to check the Dock at Island View top rial on one of them is coming off.

Library

Ms. Roundtree presented the proposed Library budget to the Board at \$497,389 with no increase. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Courthouse Maintenance

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed Courthouse Maintenance budget to the Board at \$362,041.92 with no increase. Mrs. Griffith noted that staff is 2.2 full time equivalent. Mrs. Griffith noted that this line item provides for maintenance and repair of (9) different locations- main courthouse, courthouse annex in Apalachicola, courthouse annex in Carrabelle, admin building in Eastpoint, old jail storage location, public defender building, two small storage buildings and Chapman auditorium. Mrs. Griffith noted an estimate to apply structural sealant/address drainage in SW corner of courthouse and ties into drain structures. Mrs. Griffith noted that the Garden Center in Carrabelle has found a home and is listed under the Senior Services budget. Mr. Moron noted that the annex project is ready to move forward, but we do not have the funds. It is a \$205k project. Mr. Moron noted that the woodwork is the bulk of the cost as well as wiring and setup for new sounds system. Commissioner Ward asked if this could possibly be a legislative appropriation. Mr. Moron noted it may be possible. Commissioner Ward expressed her frustration with the budget and limited funds. Mrs. Griffith noted that she has allocated a certain amount for the repairs of the health department building. The awarded bid was \$141k however there is a significant expectation of change order for rot repair. She noted that she had doubled the bid amount in the capital outlay funds and should we not need the full amount we could use those funds for the annex project. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

The Board recessed at 10:10 am and reconvened at 10:20 am.

Building Department

Mr. Paterson presented the proposed Building Department budget to the Board at \$525,280 with no increase. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Planning & Zoning

Mr. Paterson presented the proposed Planning and Zoning budget to the Board at \$212,837.79 with an increase of \$35,401. Mr. Paterson noted that the 19.95% increase is attributed to hiring a full-time planner. Mrs. Griffith noted that last year we went with the option for a contract planner, it proved to be somewhat difficult that way. We are providing better services to our constituents by having a full-time planner. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Administrative Services, Fiscal Manager / Grants Coordinator

Mrs. Griffith presented the budget for Administrative Services at \$213,910.50 with an increase of \$1,500 in operating supply category. Essentially communications and travel and per diem. In the administrative budget is Cortni and she may have to travel more for SHIP training. Commissioner Ward inquired as to where the Board's travel was budgeted, and Mrs. Griffith noted that it is on the Board's side.

Mr. Moron asked the Board to consider approving a similar increase for the Board attorney. The reason he is asking today, is because whatever you set today you can go down from, but you cannot go up. I am asking you to have Erin include this in the tentative budget. I use 4% because that is what you are doing for the employees. Commissioner Ward asked if that is something we go out for bids. Mr. Moron noted that it is more for things such as the engineer. Commissioner Ward noted that she certainly knows he earns his keep. Chairman Jones noted that he is fine with adding it for discussion. Ms. Gail Riegelmayer asked the Board to please remember that is a contracted service. The county contracts with a lot of different services. The idea of building that into the budget concerns me. Commissioner Sanders noted that she does not have a problem for anyone putting in a request for a raise, but it would be better for the attorney to put in a request and for us to

renegotiate his contract. Maybe we need to revisit his contract and renegotiate. \$112K is under what you would normally pay. Chairman Jones asked if all dollars are encumbered in professional services. Mrs. Griffith noted that the attorney has a separate line item. However, we could pull from professional services if we needed to. We do have flexibility in professional services. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Mrs. Griffith presented the budget for Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator at \$181,968.46 with no increase. Chairman Jones asked how we are going up on life insurance and health insurance if there is no change in the budget. Mrs. Griffith noted that this is expenditures versus requested budget. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Emergency Management

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Emergency Management at \$372,557 with an increase of \$9,316. She noted that 16% of our federal funding has been cut. Mrs. Griffith said with the reduction of funding Mrs. Daniels is asking for a \$2k increase. Mrs. Griffith noted that the increase is for maintenance to vehicle and weather stem. Chairman Jones noted that they have added two more weather stems. After two or three years there is a maintenance contract required. Commissioner Ward noted that she wants to install the Starlink internet as a backup. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Mosquito Control

Ms. Virginia Messer presented the proposed budget for Mosquito Control at \$452,524 with no increase. However, Ms. Messer noted they are running very short on funds. She said they need an additional \$10k on the spray line. The spray alone is \$72k. They could also use an additional \$4k for repairs and \$3k for operating funds. The total increase request is \$17k. Mrs. Griffith noted that the budget request was to provide the same level of service that you are currently providing. To provide the same level of service, it is going to cost an additional \$17k. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved with \$17k increase.

Veteran's Services

Mr. Charles Elliott presented the proposed budget for Veteran's Services at \$96,933.41 with an increase of \$2,516. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Extension Office

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Extension Office at \$107,904.09 with an increase of \$2,175. Mrs. Griffith explained the increase of \$2k was the county's shared cost of his benefits and salary with the University of Florida. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Senior Services

Mr. Moron presented the proposed budget for Senior Services at \$42,281. Mr. Moron noted that when we first started this deal, it started with the issues we had with the main senior center in Carrabelle. However, I believe the board did agree that once this center was up and running, we would reduce the money we sent to Aging. We told Area Agency not to fund the Carrabelle senior center, because we would divert the money sent to Area Agency to the senior center in Carrabelle. Mr. Moron noted he could not remember the exact amount of funds for Carrabelle. He said he and Erin were looking at about 10k? Commissioner Ward asked if Area Agency asking for same amount. What we need to do is see how much they were paying to the Carrabelle center before they diverted to ECCC. Let us take that money back and send to Carrabelle. Commissioner Ward said we need to look at what they were getting originally and give it to them. The Carrabelle Center is not qualified to receive the funds directly from Area Agency, so that is why we were going to reduce the funds given to Area Agency to divert to Carrabelle. Commissioner Croom asked if the employee is a part time position? Do we pay benefits? Mrs. Griffith noted that we just pay retirement. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

The Board moved to the 3:30 agenda items at this time.

3:30 P.M. (10:50 AM)

Auditor Fees

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed Auditor Fees budget at \$127,000 with an increase of \$3,000. Mrs. Griffith

noted that she is pleased with their attention to detail, however, has some issues with their timeliness. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Insurance

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed Insurance budget. Mrs. Griffith noted that the health insurance premiums are proposed to increase by 7.40%. Mr. Moron noted that is why we need a consultant so that you can compare apples to apples. The Florida League of Cities takes over during an emergency and we have been very impressed with them during the roof issue at Weems.

Commissioner Ward noted that the health insurance cost, is that something we are going to look at as well to see if there are comparable solutions? It would be nice if people had options other than going to Tallahassee. Mrs. Griffith noted that the Florida Sheriff's Association has reached out recently. Mrs. Griffith noted that CHP does seem to be more cost predictive. Mr. Moron noted that maybe a good thing to happen is go to Capital Health and have a meeting. So, I think that you may like sitting down with them and give them concerns. They are pretty open. Commissioner Croom noted that we need to see what our options are. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Carrabelle Redevelopment Trust

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Carrabelle Redevelopment Trust. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Grants

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Grants. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Other Funds -- Including Airport

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Other Funds which includes the following: Road Paving, MSBU, Airport, Capital Outlay, Landfill, Preliminary Budget, and Special Fund. Commissioner Ward noted that she read an article where Gulf County is circumventing the corps of engineers permitting by filing a state of emergency. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

The Board moved to Tourist Development Council at this time.

Tourist Development Council

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Tourist Development Council for \$4,189,700. Commissioners tentatively approved.

Non-Governmental without increases

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for the non-Governmental without increases which include: Humane Society Budget, Refuge House Budget, and Area Agency on Aging Franklin Foods. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Franklin Soil & Water Conservation Budget

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget for Franklin Soil and Water Conservation Budget in the amount of \$16,193.31. Commissioner Ward noted that she would like to find out what the service is for. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

The Board recessed at 11:28 am and reconvened at 1:30 pm.

1:30 P.M.

Health Department

Ms. Sara Quaranta presented the proposed Health Department budget for \$49,000 as well as the Environmental Health Position. The salary for this position amounts to \$42,500.00. Of this amount, the health department is contributing \$21,250.00 toward the salary portion and an additional \$8,004.00 toward fringe benefits, totaling \$29,254.00. The Franklin County Board of County Commission will contribute \$21,250.00 toward the salary

and \$23,183.00 toward benefits, for a total \$44,433.00. Mrs. Griffith noted that the overall impact to the budget was \$25k as she increased the line item from \$50-75k. Commissioner Ward tentatively approved.

Weems Hospital

Mr. David Walker presented the proposed Weems Hospital budget to the Board. He noted there is no increase from last year's budget. Mr. Walker noted that the cost of EMS has been prorated through March 31st. Mrs. Griffith noted that cost to run EMS is more than the \$382,128 allocated each year and the hospital subsidizing out of the hospital operating fund to cover the remainder. Mrs. Griffith summarized fund 125 healthcare trust fund.

FUND 125, Healthcare Trust Fund

As passed by voters, the Franklin County Discretionary Sales Surtax of 1% took effect on January 1, 2008. The estimated proceeds this upcoming year will be \$3,564,774. Approximately 50% (\$1,782,387) of the sales tax proceeds is transferred each year to defray the operating costs of Weems Memorial Hospital, \$120,000 will go to support clinical operations through Weems Memorial Hospital, and approximately \$1,535,481 will fund the ambulance service run by Weems for the first half of the upcoming fiscal year, and by the county in the second half of the upcoming fiscal year. The balance of the sales tax proceeds (\$126,906) as well as 100% of the interest earnings will go towards the available balance for capital outlay projects. At the end of 2026, barring any additional capital expenditures from the fund, there will be approximately \$13,668,600 available in the fund. Commissioner Croom tentatively approved.

Circuit & County Judge

Mr. Brian Rogers presented the proposed Circuit and County Judge budget to the Board. Mr. Moron noted that this is the discussion from earlier in the meeting regarding the annex courtroom renovations. Mrs. Teresa Evans noted the limited space for the jurors. They need additional accommodations. The other thing is scheduling, we work with the circuit judge to use the main courtroom for trials, but our county is growing. Chairman Jones asked if the \$205k construction costs falls completely on the county. Mr. Rogers noted that he does not have any ideas of funds that may be available, but he can research it. He believes it initially falls onto the county. Part of this renovation will be displays, sound system, etc. This was about \$50k that we were able to keep off of the county expense. Mrs. Griffith noted that she mentioned earlier about the health department siding and hoping it comes in lower. We could also ask Mr. Doug for alternates, and if there is a way for him to partial out the project. Mr. Moron noted that the problem with the sound system they are going to prewire the bench. The most important thing is the juror box. Mrs. Griffith noted that we should speak with Mr. Doug to see if we can phase the project. Mr. Rogers indicated that the sound system is designed to be integrated into the construction and he does not believe it can be phased in. Commissioner Ward asked if there are any grants that we could use? RIFA? Office of the Criminal Justice? we have received some grants from them in the past for judicial upgrades. Chairman Jones asked what about adding \$60k to the budget and getting a loan to pay over the next few years. Mrs. Griffith noted that we could do that. We just need to see where we are on the health department siding job, we may not even need to do it for that long. Mr. Rogers noted that from Judge Sjostrom thank you for all of the things you do throughout the year. The Board tentatively approved.

State Attorney

Ms. Mary Dean presented the proposed State Attorney budget to the Board via Zoom. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Public Defender

Casey O'Brien presented the proposed Public Defended budget to the Board via Zoom. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Guardian Ad Litem

Ms. Deborah Moore presented the proposed Guardian Ad Litem budget to the Board. Commissioner Croom tentatively approved.

Dog Island Conservation District

Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

Apalachee Center

Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

2:30 P.M.

Non-Governmental Agencies (only those with increases)

The Board moved forward to Special Funds – County Airport Fund.

Request for Funds to Support Haney Technical Satellite Campus

Mrs. Griffith explained the campus location of Haney. \$25K allocation two year

Mr. George spoke of the two separate programs. The Tango program is where students are building an airplane at the school, and we are raising money to fund. Haney did recommend the program to us because it will feed the school. The students coming out of there will get 30% credit towards the school so basically skip 1/3 of the program. We are asking with the education board to cover the hangar rental and utilities. We have written a grant for \$265k. Erin noted that \$15k from the county airport fund to repair the hangar, repairs that would have been done for any tenant to occupy the hangar. Mr. George noted that the renovations will be phased in. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

The Board moved to Carrabelle Food Pantry at this time.

Carrabelle Food Pantry

Ms. Marilyn Hall presented the proposed budget for the Carrabelle Food Pantry at \$7,000 with an increase of \$2,117. Mrs. Griffith noted that the increase is for the direct purchase of food. Ms. Hall noted that they are looking at opening up on a weekday. Commissioner Sanders tentatively approved.

The Board recessed at 2:14 and reconvened at 2:30 pm.

Franklin's Promise

Mrs. Lori Switzer and Joe Taylor presented the proposed budget for the Franklin's Promise at \$13,145 with an increase of \$3,380. They noted the increase is directly related to the increase in the cost of food. Chairman Jones asked about the funds not being used for. Mrs. Switzer noted that all of the money that they receive from Franklin County goes directly to food. The other expenses are covered by grants. Mr. Moron asked how they are distributing since they moved to Eastpoint. Mr. Joe Taylor noted that they are centrally located in Eastpoint and hoping everyone will continue to pick up and distribute. Mr. Moron noted that it will be a challenge to those who rode their bikes or walked to pick it. Mr. Taylor noted that they work closely with churches and ECCC. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Big Bend Transit -- Transportation Disadvantage

Mrs. Griffith presented the proposed budget. Chairman Jones noted that they have also agreed to do free rides for the first three months because they know that they are having to wait for our budget cycle to go through. Commissioner Amison tentatively approved.

Chairman Jones asked if we needed a motion and vote for the \$60k for the courtroom annex. The changes to the proposed budget were notated as follows:

- Decrease \$936k Sheriff's Budget
- Increase \$17k Mosquito Control Budget
- Increase \$60k phased implementation of courtroom

Millage rate 5.0459; \$502,892 over roll back rate

Commissioner Sanders asked if the 4% cost of living increase is included? Yes, it is included in budget at \$501,877 total cost of living increase.

Commissioner Ward asked how many of the NGOs that we have to do per Florida statute. Mrs. Griffith noted

that NGOs we do not have to support per statute. Mrs. Griffith noted that is some of the services that are discretionary. They do benefit the community but are not mandated by statute. Commissioner Sanders asked Mrs. Griffith how the Board and county will be affected if the stuff at the legislature regarding property taxes continues to progress.

Mrs. Griffith noted that she does not see us being a feeder county, and sales tax would be slim to none to us. Just a lot of fear and apprehension. Commissioner Sanders asked her to tell us how much of the budget is funded with ad valorem taxes. Mrs. Griffith noted it is about 17%. Commissioner Sanders said it is something we are going to have to look at.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Ward noted that it is a tough position and place to be in. Our taxpayers on fixed income cannot afford their taxes to go up. It is a precarious situation for us to be in. I thank everyone for working together to make these numbers work.

Chairman Jones noted that he hopes we do not get less money for trying to do a good job. He noted that we have come down 1 ½ mills since he has been on the board. Commissioner Amison noted that he believes if the property tax bill passes, sales tax will be increased to make up the difference. People need to look at how much they consume and consider the effects of a higher tax rate for sales tax. Chairman Jones noted that it will be similar to the \$15 an hour minimum wage. Minimum wage has increased but so have the price of goods.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Ricky Jones – Chairman

Attest:

Michele Maxwell – Clerk of Courts

The audio is available upon request. Please e-mail jgay@franklinclerk.com, call 850-653-8861 to speak with the Administrative Assistant, or submit a request in writing to obtain audio of this meeting.