

It should be noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance at the meeting was strictly limited to 10 persons and social distancing (masks optional) was practiced during the meeting. The public was invited to use teleconferencing services provided for public comment.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY
MAY 12, 2020
PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:00 p.m., in the Meeting Room of the County Commissioners Office, Commissioner President Craig N. Mathies, Sr., declared a Public Hearing open regarding Somerset County's Budget for Fiscal Year 2021. Also in attendance were Commissioner Vice-President Charles Laird, Commissioner Rex Simpkins, Commissioner Eldon Willing, Commissioner Randy Laird, County Administrator-Clerk, Ralph D. Taylor; Finance Director, Gene Adkins; Executive Aide, Lory E. Ebron, Executive Secretary Kim Lopez; and Internal Auditor, Sharon Muir.

Mr. Taylor began by stating that the Constant Yield advertisement had been published in the April 29, 2020 Crisfield-Somerset County Times and the Daily Times newspaper and Somerset Herald publications on May 6, 2020 to announce the hearing tonight. The purpose of tonight's hearing is two-fold:

1. To receive public comment on the FY21 proposed budget; and
2. Pursuant to the provision of Section 6-308 of the Property Tax Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, to present the Constant Yield Rate for FY 2021 as \$1.0018 and the tax rate for FY 2021 as \$1.00 per \$100 of full-value assessment. This proposed tax rate represents no change from last year's rate and it was noted that this is the fifth consecutive year that our tax rate is below constant yield.

The Budget, being discussed tonight, is the estimated income and planned expenditures as discussed by the Board through today, May 12, 2020. Final deliberation on the Budget will continue until Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 2:00 p.m., (the regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners), at which time the tax rate for FY 2021 will be set. The procedure for the hearing was explained, and anyone wishing to make comments will be asked to come forward, state their name and address, and present their testimony. Written comments on the proposed budget will be accepted until Monday, May 22, 2020.

Next Mr. Adkins first reported that the Somerset County Board of Education budgeted appropriation included in this budget for FY 2021 will be \$10,189,253 to be paid from the County General Fund. This compares to \$10,088,825 for FY 2020. Increased funding was approved due to a change in the formula for calculating local maintenance of effort.

Mr. Adkins then presented the budget highlights in a PowerPoint presentation. Handouts were also provided which included the complete budget detail. Mr. Adkins presented the following FY21

Budget Highlights:

- The County has budgeted an increase of 1.25%, totaling \$169,177 in real property tax revenues for FY21
- The Commissioners have proposed to retain the current real property tax rate for FY21 at \$1.00 which is less than the constant yield tax rate of \$1.0018
- Personal Property revenue is projected to increase by \$123,725 over the prior year's budget due to Phase II of the Great Bay Solar Project
- \$3.6 million in capital planned projects approved included Airport Projects (\$776,043), Waterways (\$622,000) and Board of Education/JM Tawes carryover (\$500,000)
- The formula change for Maintenance of Effort resulted in an increase in the county's appropriation to the Board of Education of \$100,428
- Total appropriation approved to County Roads is \$1.656 million
- \$956,449 of fund balance will be used to balance the budget
- In response to estimated impacts related to COVID-19, all Departments were asked to reduce operating budgets by 2%, and Capital Projects were delayed unless grant funded

Mr. Adkins then reviewed the county tax rate for fiscal years 2011-2021. Assessed property tax assessed value by districts was reviewed as well in addition to projected revenue from property taxes, noted as \$3,804,800, which is slightly higher from last year.

In closing, following a review of significant revenues and expenditures in detail, Mr. Adkins restated that a total of \$956,449 of fund balance will be used to balance the budget, and the total FY21 budget is \$39,748,309.

President Mathies asked if there was anyone present wishing to speak.

Commissioner Simpkins questioned the continued decline of real property assessment value for the Crisfield district. Mr. Adkins replied that the figure references the last sale values for the property. Mr. Adkins will contact the state office to inquire if there is more information.

Mr. Taylor then asked if there was anyone available via teleconference that wanted to speak.

Via teleconference, Mr. Jerry Boston, 10272 Charles Boston Road, Princess Anne, addressed the Board. Mr. Boston thanked everyone and the Commissioners for keeping the tax rate at \$1.00. He understood these were hard times and he appreciates the hard work everyone is doing.

Via teleconference, Senator Mary Beth Carozza, Ocean City Maryland addressed the Board. Ms. Carozza sent her greetings to all of the Commissioners and staff who are all working together during these difficult times. Senator Carozza stated she wanted to listen in on the county's budget to see as the county works through budget priorities where she might be helpful with the COVID-19 taking over on the State budget, stating the importance for us to coordinate even more so on Somerset County priorities, and she

plans to do so; this being the purpose for listening in tonight. She mentioned her recent visit to Crisfield, where she visited the nursing home staff and local businesses. Ms. Carozza closed her comments in saying she is missing us all and she is looking forward to spending more time in Somerset County once we get to this next level.

With there being no other business, President Mathies declared the public hearing closed at 7:25 p.m. Written comments will be taken until May 22, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted:



Lory E. Ebron
Executive Aide

Approved By:



Board of County Commissioners
For Somerset County