



PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

September 12, 2023 12:00 pm

A Public Hearing was held on September 12, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall to solicit input from the public on the proposed 2023 millage rate of 9.212 for property taxes.

Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar, Councilmember Paulette Chavers and Shari Barr, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Public Information Officer Layne Phillips, Director of Finance Cindy West, Director of Human Resources Demetrius Bynes, and City Clerk Leah Harden.

At 12:00 pm Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the meeting to order.

City Manager Charles Penny presented the City of Statesboro Fiscal Year 2024 operating budget. The objectives to this year's budget is to retain and recruit exceptional employees, increase the tax base, with an emphasis on public safety. The budget highlights show a 24.8 % total expense increase as well as an 8.2 % general fund expense increase. Mr. Penny reviewed the compensation and benefits, current & future opportunities, as well as concerns and unknowns. The property tax millage rate comparison with other communities places Statesboro in the middle at 7.308. The current rates for Bulloch County are 12.85, the Board of Education at 8.478, and a proposed rate for the City of Statesboro of 9.212. The increased expenditures in the FY2024 budget are salaries & benefits, small business recruiter debt service, contract street labor, contract parks labor, compensation study, and Statesboro Police Department small tools. The General Fund pays for public safety employees and has an increase of 8 new personnel from FY2020 to FY2024 including one in Human Resources, one in Village Builders, and six in the Police Department. In addition the Fire Fund has increased by 25 positions, four dispatchers and 21 firefighters.

In summary the City's budget is financially sound with strong reserves, good growth in property values, and increased new investment. The question remains could we balance the City's budget without increasing the millage rate. The answer is yes however it would require the use of 2.4 million of fund balance which would further erode this "emergency" fund. A millage rate increase would allow the City to cover the increased personnel cost as well as replace the fund balance used last year. It will also prepare the City for a pay plan increase in the FY2025 budget. The City needs to continue to grow its tax base through annexations and residential, commercial, and industrial improvements and new construction. When the tax base is increased what we see is increased revenues giving the City the ability to roll back the millage rate in the future.

Casandra Mikell stated she lives in the county but has a rental property in the city. She stated she has attended tax hearings of the Bulloch County Commissioners and the Bulloch County Board of Education and that is has been frustrating to ask elected officials to keep their hands out of

citizen's pockets. Ms. Mikell asked the city not to approve an increase of its millage rate. She stated families in Statesboro are hurting and tax increase will hurt them even more.

Lawton Sack a city resident stated we need to be careful because this money just does not magically appear it is coming out of hardworking people's pocket and it's going to have an impact on our citizens and businesses. With the inflationary costs people are facing it's going to be a challenge. Mr. Lawton stated with increases from the Board of Education and Bulloch County to weigh everything as the decision is being made.

Jane Sack stated she lives in the county and spoke on behalf of the senior citizens in this area. She stated she has a lot of friends who are widows who don't have extra money. Ms. Sack encouraged the city to look at its budget and listen to its senior citizens.

Len Fatica stated he lives in the county and stated he has been to almost all the tax hearings and he appreciates the City Council, County Commissioners, and the School Board for listening to the rhetoric that has been going on. Mr. Fatica stated he applauds the city for going after state and federal funds to help the budget. He stated that the State is sitting on a \$10 billion dollar reserve and should be helping.

No action taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk