



PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

September 12, 2023 6:00 pm

A Public Hearing was held on September 12, 2023 at 6:00 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 Chaves and Councilmember Shari Barr. Also present was City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, Assistant to the City Manager Olympia Gains, Director of Human Resources Demetrius Bynes, Public Information Officer Layne Phillips, Director of Finance Cindy West, and City Clerk Leah Harden.

At 6:00 pm Mayor Jonathan McCollar called the public hearing 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. Mr. Penny presented a chart showing the Statesboro millage rate history from 1994-2023. The rate was highest in 2000 at 9.2 with the lowest rate of 6.358 from 2008 – 2018. 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.

Lawton Sack a city resident spoke regarding economic side of this and stated there is a burden on the limited tax base. He also stated that when the city starts growing is begins to lose focus on

the cultural centers in the city. While things are being built out around the city, people in the heart of the city are being forgotten about and their voices are not being heard.

Jane Sack a county resident stated she is concerned about her friends who are struggling now and asked mayor and council to think about the people.

Cassandra Mikell a county resident asked council to think about the businesses and citizens and asked council to vote no on the increase.

No action taken was taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk