

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for a FY2026-2027 Budget Work Session on May 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Brooks County Administration Building, in the Commissioners Chambers, located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mrs. Myra Exum, Chair; Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Mr. Patrick Folsom; and Mr. Lee Larko. Mr. Willie Cody was not present. Others present were Mr. Buddy Johnson, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Ms. Janice Jarvis, Finance Director; Ms. Leslie Hall; and various Department Heads.

**I. Call to Order**

**A. Prayer & Pledge** – Mr. Maxwell led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

**A. FY2026-2027 Budget Work Session**

County Administrator gave an overview of the budget process, stating the finance team reviewed the department budget requests, highlighting significant cuts and reallocations made after meetings with most department heads. Current projected revenues for the upcoming year are lower (\$14.6M) than last year (\$16.3M), primarily due to the absence of FEMA reimbursements. Projected expenditures are \$18M, up by \$1.7M over last year, resulting in a projected deficit of \$3.4M. approximately \$2M from fund balance (reserves) may be used to offset the deficit, with an aim to minimize its use over the year. The Board may anticipate a millage rate increase of up to 2.25 mills to cover the deficit, including the elimination of the fire and general fund needs. Administrator Johnson further emphasized that running a lean budget next year is required to stay well within the budget.

**Departmental Review Highlights**

**I. General Administration** – Most increases are due to correcting misallocated items, workers' compensation, retirement, and insurance; no salary increases requested.

**II. Elections** – requested salary increases for both in-house and temporary poll workers; rental and travel costs up due to new legislation and training needs.

**III. Finance Department** – Increase mainly due to workers' compensation; legal fees line to be removed; plans to shift IT purchases to capital projects.

**V. Human Resources** – Request for an additional employee; not recommended due to budget constraints; suggestion of using interns or technical school partnerships.

**VI. Tax Offices (Tax Commissioner/Tax Assessor)** – Minimal changes, with some cost savings by Tax Commissioner not replacing positions. Printing and binding costs fluctuate with special projects.

**VII. Sheriff's Office, Uniform Patrol, Jail, Criminal Investigation & Narcotics** – Significant request for salary increases and four new positions to address pay disparity and retention. A major increase in jail operations to raise starting pay, from \$12.64/hour to \$16.00/hour to be competitive with surrounding counties to retain employees. Administrator advised the Board that vehicle leasing will be phased out and the fleet will be repurposed.

Uniform Patrol requested a significant salary increase and four new positions to address pay disparity and retention of employees. The pay will increase from \$18.54/hour to \$23.00/hour. The requested salary increases for the Sheriff's Department will influence all the employee salaries in the departments, Uniform Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Jail, Narcotics, and Court Services.

**VIII. Fire Department** – Discussed new firefighters positions proposed to staff a new fire station (Dixie); contingent upon grant funding (SAFER grant and federal construction grant); there are plans to adjust the budget if grants are not received.

**IX. EMA & 911** – Requested increase in salary for 911 dispatchers to retain staff and compete regionally. An increase in overtime was requested due to staff absences.

**X. Airport Authority** – Discussion on whether to fund a manager position; it was a consensus to defer until authority is established and funding sources are clearer.

**XI. Road & Mowing Departments** – Substantial cost savings were achieved; and ongoing efforts to reduce equipment rental and fuel costs.

**XII. Senior Center** – The request for part-time assistant (\$11.00/hr.) was justified; ongoing support for meal delivery program is critical for local seniors.

**XIII. Victim Witness Program** – A lengthy discussion on funding, necessity, and overlap with DA services. The consensus is to gather more data before final decision; potential to seek additional grants to offset county funding. The budget for FY2026-2027 is \$92,555, the grant is approximately \$45,000.00. The grant funds have been declining since COVID. Question: How can the county ensure proper justification for increased funding to the Victim Witness program? Victim Witness Program to provide detailed data on services and grant funding for further review.

### **Action Plans**

- Department heads and finance team to adjust budget based on workshop feedback.
- HR to research intern/technical school partnership for coverage.
- Finance to prepare a FAQ sheet for Commissioners to address public questions about millage rate increase.
- Final budget adjustments to be prepared for the May 26<sup>th</sup> public hearing/work session.
- Commissioners review budget individually and coordinate any final suggested changes before the next meeting.
- Emphasis on running a “lean” budget in the coming year and justify all increases.
- Recognition that the county is transitioning from budget cleanup to a more accurate, data-driven process.
- Decision on VWA program funding; more data to be collected and reviewed.

Mrs. Myra Exum, Chair

Mr. Buddy Johnson, County Administrator

Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk