

Houston County Commissioners Meeting

August 8, 2023

Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in special called meeting at 9:00 am on Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, GA, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Talton, Gottwals, and Robinson present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, Community Planner Jake Cox.

County Attorney Tom Hall gave the Invocation.

Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Perdue opened the meeting with a presentation of the proposed 2023 millage rate with a focus on four options that the Board could choose from: a complete rollback to 9.066 mills, hold steady at the current 9.810 millage rate, increase the millage rate to 9.811 mills to remain at the tax cap, or another option all together.

Chairman Perdue then presented considerations the Board needed to examine regarding funding variables: property tax is the most reliable revenue source, collection could vary, impact to the fire millage rate, reserves that Houston County enjoys, and reevaluations of real property.

Chairman Perdue then stated the recommendation that the Board was examining included a roll back of the millage rate by .249 mills providing for a middle ground of giving some tax relief to the citizens while also meeting the revenue needs of the County.

Chairman Perdue presented a rundown of the millage rate history for the last 6 years in Houston County, and then closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened a Public Hearing.

Shirlyn Johnson-Granville thanked the Board for rolling back the millage rate on behalf of retirees and senior citizens in Houston County on fixed incomes.

Alan Culpepper spoke of his concerns regarding property values increasing, which also raises taxes, and had a question concerning the expansion of services to residents in the southern part of Houston County.

Chairman Perdue replied that he would answer this later during Commissioner comments.

Norman Gay commended the Board for the job they are doing and stated he pays taxes in a neighboring county with a lot higher millage rate, but with none of the high level of services he receives here in Houston County. He complimented the Commissioners and the Board of Education for the efficient way that they are run and applauded both for the way in which they conduct their operations.

Gary McGee, Sr. spoke about being on a fixed income and that he was not in favor of the millage rate being raised at all. He also spoke about the services in south Houston County being below where they could and should be in relation to other parts of Houston County. He was also complimentary of the way Houston County operated.

There being no further comments Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Chairman Perdue mentioned the dates and times of the next two public hearings on the millage rate Tuesday, August 15th at 9:00 am and 6:00 pm at the Houston County Annex on Carl Vinson Parkway in Warner Robins.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Commissioner Comments.

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Chairman Perdue began by thanking those who came and spoke during the meeting. Regarding the question of services in rural areas of Houston County, he mentioned the \$20 million dollar investment in rural waterline expansion using ARPA Grant funds in the underserved portions of Houston County. He also spoke about the analysis of where to put water lines in due to the need to flush the lines frequently to maintain water quality if the consumption level is low due to a sparsely served population by the water line. This ongoing cost and the construction costs are some of the things to be considered. He also spoke of the nine new full-time firefighters who have been hired for the new Bonaire fire station and mentioned Chief Stoner's plan to have all full-time firefighters serving with the Houston County Fire Department to improve public safety service in unincorporated Houston County. He then spoke of the trash service in Houston County and advised that ongoing meetings were taking place with Waste Management to improve the level of service the company is providing. In closing he mentioned his thanks to Flint Energies for their initiative of bringing rural broadband to parts of Houston County.

Ms. Robinson thanked those who attended and participated in the meeting and gave their input. She also mentioned that of the different options presented by the Chairman, the one which gives both tax relief and revenue the County needs seems to be the one that is most fair and just. She stated this option provides tax relief through the rollback and funding for the County to continue to provide the services to residents they are used to receiving.

Mr. Byrd thanked those who spoke so highly of Houston County and stated that it was an honor to serve on the Board. He advised that the goal is to provide the highest level of services to the citizens of Houston County in the most fiscally responsible way possible. He mentioned that the Board is keenly aware of the effect that inflation and the property reevaluations have had on Houston County residents. He also stated that inflation has affected the Board as well in cost of delivering services, and this millage rate being partially rolled back will help residents with their tax burden but also provide resources the County needs for the essential services residents need.

Mr. Talton thanked those for being in attendance and their kind words and input and recognized Chairman Perdue and senior staff for the hard work that has been done regarding the work of setting the millage rate.

Mr. Gottwals mentioned the word variability and how the meaning of that word comes to his mind regarding finances and planning in this post-COVID and inflationary environment we are currently in. He further said that the balanced approach and way the Board is looking to set the millage rate is the best approach.

Chairman Perdue thanked those who attended the meeting, gave the dates and times for the next two public meetings and called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner