

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

September 10, 2009

A meeting was held at the Murdock Administration Complex in Room 119, Port Charlotte, Florida.

Members present were: Chairman Duffy, Commissioner Loftus, Commissioner Starr, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Skidmore, County Administrator Baltz, County Attorney Knowlton, and Deputy Clerk Manley. The following members were absent: None

The meeting was called to order at **5:01 PM** followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Changes to the Agenda:

Addition #1: A-2: Requested by Administration: a) Approve a Resolution adopting a Debt Policy for Charlotte County; and b) Approve a Resolution adopting a Financial Reserve Policy for Charlotte County.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO APPROVE CHANGES TO THE AGENDA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SKIDMORE

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

A. County Administrator

1. Opening Comments.

Mr. Baltz commented on completed work, the budget regarding the millage rate, and closure of some items tonight.

2. Requested by: Administration: **RECOMMENDED ACTION:** a) Approve a Resolution adopting a Debt Policy for Charlotte County, and b) Approve a Resolution adopting a Financial Reserve Policy for Charlotte County.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2009-248 AND RESOLUTION 2009-249, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

B. County Budget Officer

2. Review of FY09/10 Budget Process

Mr. Sandrock advised this is the first of two public hearings and provided an overview of the meeting agenda and procedure by power point presentation. Mr. Sandrock advised that changes from the July 10, 2009 workshop are listed on pages 9 thru 12 of the agenda; that the proposed aggregate millage rate is 7.5411 mills, which is 18.30% under the current year aggregate rolled back millage rate of 9.2300 mills; and the Total Proposed Net County-wide budget is \$780,087,824.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO ADOPT CHANGES FROM THE JULY 10, 2009 WORKSHOP AS LISTED ON PAGES 9 THROUGH 12, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

I. COUNTYWIDE FUNDS

Mr. Sandrock read the Countywide Millage Rates and Funds into the record, indicated the proposed countywide millage rate of 5.7096 mills is under the rollback rate of 6.9688 mills by 18.07%, and indicated the public comments should be limited to those funds.

Public Comment:

Peter Wiersma commented on inflation of county budgets during the real estate boom and tax increases.

Douglas Albrecht commented on taxes and street paving in scrub jay territory.

Bill Cameron acknowledged the BCC, Messrs. Baltz and Sandrock for their efforts in supporting the citizens of Charlotte County.

Verna Tamera commented on real estate values, bank loans, and real estate taxes.

Mike Brown commented regarding the budget and attendance at School Board meetings.

Dolores Gaess commented on elderly abuse and the libraries' schedules.

COMMISSIONER SKIDMORE MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER Loftus

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

Chairman Duffy commented on citizen emails regarding tax increases, Save Our Homes Program, Trim notices, and advised citizens with property value issues to contact the Property Appraiser.

RECESS 6:05 PM - 6:20 PM

COMMISSIONER SKIDMORE MOVED TO REDUCE THE COUNTY-WIDE AD VALOREM MILLAGE RATE BY 1/2 MILL, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

Commissioner Loftus requested making an amendment to the motion to reduce the rate by one-tenth of a mill. There was Board discussion to reduce the millage rate by half a mill. Mr. Sandrock advised that the reduction amounts to \$8.4M to the budget, that it is recommended the reserves be increased by \$9M, and commented on the impact to taxpayers and County. Discussion ensued regarding the amount of impact. **Chairman Duffy** suggested reducing the millage rate by one-tenth.

Commissioner Starr clarified the motion on the floor would wipe out savings that were cut from the budget, and if the motion is passed, it would create a problem for our reserves. Mr. Sandrock responded affirmatively. **Commissioner Cummings** commented on the advertisement setting the millage rate, the amount of reserves, minimum levels, amount of funds anticipated, and expressed concern with not changing the millage rate.

Chairman Duffy requested Mr. Sandrock's guidance. Mr. Sandrock recommended building the reserves to a more comfortable level due to the economy, and leave the budget as presented. **Chairman Duffy** commented regarding no additional employee layoffs, future raises, financial stability, and reduction to the Sheriff's budget and its impact. Further Board discussion ensued regarding the budget reduction by half a mill.

MOTION FAILED 2:3.

COMMISSIONER SKIDMORE MOVED TO ADOPT TENTATIVE COUNTY-WIDE AD VALOREM MILLAGE RATE AND THE COUNTY WIDE TENTATIVE BUDGET AS READ INTO THE RECORD BY THE CHARLOTTE COUNTY BUDGET OFFICER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

II. VOTED DEBT SERVICE FUND (Environmentally Sensitive Lands)

Mr. Sandrock reported that the Series 2008 (GOB) Debt Service Fund Tentative Budget is \$3,685,280 and the voted millage is 0.2000; and explained there is no public input on this item.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO ADOPT THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS MILLAGE RATE AND THE TENTATIVE BUDGET AS READ INTO RECORD BY CHARLOTTE COUNTY BUDGET OFFICER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

Mr. Sandrock responded to **Commissioner Skidmore's** inquiry as to what the money is being used for. **Commissioner Starr** commented on \$5M left in the General Fund, its uses, and additional funds from other entities. Mr. Sandrock commented on a grant that was applied for and suggested it as an option for debt service payment. **Commissioner Skidmore** asked if the Ordinance could be amended. Attorney Knowlton responded that it could not. **Commissioner Starr** clarified whether the grant could be used for debt service. Mr. Sandrock referred to an FCT grant and suggested discussion regarding the use of funds.

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

III. AD VALOREM - MUNIIPAL SERVICE TAXING UNITS - MSTUS

Mr. Sandrock read into the record the proposed budgets and millage rates for each of the MSTUs listed on pages 3 and 4 of the agenda, and stated that the proposed "aggregate" County Millage Rate is 7.5411 mills, which is 18.30% under the current "aggregate" rolled-back rate of 9.2300 mills.

Chairman Duffy pointed out that five of the six items are decreases.

Public Comment:- None

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED AGGREGATE COUNTY MILLAGE RATE OF 7.5411, WHICH IS 18.30% UNDER THE CURRENT YEAR AGGREGATE ROLLBACK RATE OF 9.2300 MILLS AND TO ADOPT MSTU BUDGETS AS READ INTO THE RECORD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS.

Commissioner Skidmore inquired as to the rolled back rate for the lighting district. Mr. Sandrock responded that it is .1925 mills. Bob Halfhill stated that he researched the lighting district; commented on the budget and millage rates, the increased scope of work, increased electric, staffing level, and that the reserve cannot be maintained under the present millage rate. **Commissioner Skidmore** responded to Mr. Halfhill's comments. Mr. Sandrock suggested the gas tax and general revenues as funding options. **Commissioner Skidmore** asked **Commissioner Loftus** to amend his motion to accept all the recommendations except Greater Charlotte Street Lighting District. **Commissioner Loftus** replied that he would not, but would split the difference, and inquired as to the amount that would be generated. Mr. Halfhill explained what the funds would pay for and gave history of the prior budget of the Greater Charlotte Street Lighting District. Mr. Sandrock commented on the impacts and stated the millage rate would be .216.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO AMEND THE GREATER CHARLOTTE STREET LIGHTING DISTRICT RATE OF INCREASE OVER THE ROLLBACK OF .216 MILLS. THE MOTION DID NOT RECEIVE A SECOND AND WAS LOST.

Commissioner Cummings and **Chairman Duffy** both stated that they would not support the amended motion. Mr. Sandrock responded to **Commissioner Cummings'** inquiry regarding the definition of the roll back rate. **Commissioner Loftus** withdrew his amended motion and moved on his original motion with **Commissioner Cummings** supporting his original second.

MOTION CARRIED 4:1. COMMISSIONER SKIDMORE OPPOSING.

IV. NON-COUNTYWIDE FUNDS AND NON-AD VALOREM MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNITS (MSBU)

Mr. Sandrock advised that all applicable assessment rates that exceed a previous set maximum for the Non-Countywide Funds and Non-Ad Valorem Municipal Service Benefits Units (MSBU) shown on pages 5,6 and 7 have been adopted in prior public hearings and do not need to be read individually into the record, but read sub-totals of each group into the record.

Public Comment:

Dave Rubin spoke in favor of keeping the assessment.

Michael Gunderson commented regarding MSBU costs increase.

Haig Nalbandian stated the MSBU rate should be maintained.

Catherine Herska commented on the costs and improvements of the MSBU.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

Commissioner Cummings commented on the use of the money if rate stayed the same. Mr. Halfhill gave history and recommendation, commented on the intent and goals of the MSBU committee, his recommendation for a bridge and a roll back, plans for renovation, and suggested going forward with the design. **Commissioner Loftus** stressed that the assessment had only been for one year and Attorney Knowlton and Mr. Baltz confirmed it.

Commissioner Loftus said he will only vote to revert back to the original assessment. **Commissioner Starr** agreed that it was a one year assessment and would agree to roll it back and honor the commitment, commented on Mr. Halfhill's solution that his vote would be to roll it back to the original rate, and asked that Mr. Halfhill go out and do the design work and bring back a five year plan. **Commissioner Cummings** expressed concerns on being able to keep a base line level of service. Mr. Halfhill reviewed the finances of the MSBU, commented on the actual cost of the bridge, and the plans for bridge design, maintenance, and renovation.

Commissioner Cummings asked for comparison between bridge expenses and this year's rate. Mr. Halfhill commented on what would be provided and could not commit to the range tonight.

Commissioner Skidmore agreed with Mr. Halfhill's recommendation. Mr. Sandrock then stated his recommendations for the motion.

COMMISSIONER LOFTUS MOVED TO CHANGE THE MSBU RATES TO BE \$50 FOR VACANT AND \$43 FOR OCCUPIED AND TO ADOPT, BY ONE MOTION, THE BUDGETS OF THE REMAINING NON-AD VALOREM FUNDS, AS LISTED ON PAGES 5,6,& 7, TOTALING \$374,564, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR.

MOTION CARRIED 4:1. COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS OPPOSING.

Mr. Sandrock requested clarification that the motion and vote also include the board action at the bottom of page 7, referred to them but did not read them, and recommended doing both board actions.

COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS MOVED TO ADOPT, BY ONE MOTION, THE BUDGETS OF THE REMAINING NON-AD VALOREM FUNDS, AS LISTED ON PAGES 5, 6, & 7, TOTALING \$374,564,264 AS AMENDED PER THE NORTHWEST PORT CHARLOTTE RATES TO \$50 FOR VACANT AND \$43 FOR OCCUPIED, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR.

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS MOVED TO ADOPT RESOLUTION STARTING ON PAGE 14(RESOLUTION 2009-259) TO ADOPT MSBU RATES AND TO ADOPT MSBU BUDGETS AS LISTED ON PAGES 6 & 7 AS MODIFIED AND READ INTO THE RECORD BY MR. SANDROCK, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STARR.

MOTION CARRIED 5:0.

Mr. Sandrock explained the next meeting. Mr. Baltz applauded the work that had been done, as well as the public policy discussion, summarized the meeting, and commented on a message he received from Sarasota County Administrator regarding our purchasing processes. **Commissioner Starr** expressed concern regarding not making Charlotte County businesses the focal point, gave reasons why, and stated he would be interested in a regional inclusion.

Commissioner Loftus expressed support for working on a regional basis. **Commissioner Cummings** suggested checking into what will cost local employers more and commented on his primary concern. **Commissioner Skidmore** agreed on looking at the impact on local businesses but spoke in favor of regionalism, commented that discussion is needed with Purchasing before making any decision.

Chairman Duffy stated she would like to research the item further and discuss it at another meeting, but would like to be regional with Sarasota. Mr. Baltz stated he will let Sarasota know that the BCC is willing to consider the issue but not inclined to make a change immediately.

ADJOURNED: 7:55 PM

Signature on file in Commission Minutes
Chairman

ATTEST:

BARBARA T. SCOTT, CLERK
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND
EX-OFFICIO TO THE BOARD
OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

By: Signature on file in Commission Minutes
Deputy Clerk

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