

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS - FINAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING**

**SEPTEMBER 28, 2006**

A public hearing of the Board of County Commissioner was held at the Murdock Administration Complex in Room 119, Port Charlotte, Florida. The following members were present: Chairman Moore, Commissioner D'Aprile, Commissioner DeBoer, and Commissioner Cummings. Also in attendance were County Administrator Loucks, Deputy County Attorney Gallagher, and Deputy Clerk Mitchell. The following members were absent: District 5 Commissioner. Called to order at **5:01 PM**, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. (Proof of Publication was in Order.)

**A. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

1. Opening Comments

County Administrator Loucks explained this was the second of two required public hearings, and questions on the assessed valuation of property need to be directed to the Property Appraiser's Office.

**B. COUNTY BUDGET OFFICER**

1. Changes resulting from the September 14, 2006 First Budget Public Hearing - Board adopts changes as listed on page 8.

Mr. Sandrock reviewed the changes detailed on page 8 of the agenda, and stated these changes represent a decrease to the proposed budget of \$32,268,572 resulting in a proposed Countywide budget of \$994,076,370.

**COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CHANGES AS LISTED ON PAGE 8, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DEBOER.**

**Motion Carried 4:0.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

2. The proposed aggregate county millage rate is 6.4189 mills which is 32.78% over the current year aggregate rolled-back rate of 4.8342 mills.

Mr. Sandrock read this information into the record.

3. Presentation of Tentative Proposed Budget - Total Advertised Budget \$994,076,370

Mr. Sandrock read into the record the Tentative Proposed Countywide Budget as adjusted for the Solomon Drive MSBU is \$994,076,370.

**I. COUNTYWIDE FUNDS**

Mr. Sandrock stated the proposed countywide millage rate of 4.8409 mills is over the rollback rate of 3.5873 mills by 34.95%, and read into the record the Proposed Budgets and applicable Millage Rates for each of the funds listed on page 2 of the agenda for a Total Countywide Proposed Budget of \$485,238,427 and a Millage Rate of 4.8409.

**Public Comment**

David Goodrich said the County doesn't have the money for all the listed projects.

Joan Fischer opined it would be helpful if they had a list of all the capital projects, some should be put off until next year, and more cuts are needed instead of hitting the people with such high taxes this year.

Joan Pilikian agreed with Mrs. Fischer, these projects should be postponed at least one year, said this whole tax system is against anyone who is a new homeowner in this County, taxes this high are discriminatory, and asked the Board to keep this in mind because these taxes will keep people from moving here.

Jack Donkel commented on the capital projects issue, noted this is really the 15 year plan not the five year plan because all you're doing is just moving the money from one area to another, opined promises are made but aren't kept, and these projects need to be done or taken off.

Walt Hammer opined this budget is four times the population growth, asked the Board to consider what they're doing to the businesses, noted the costs get passed onto the consumer, and opined people just can't afford anymore.

Marge Bradley said she was shocked at her TRIM; her taxes were one-fourth what she paid in Washington, DC; her property is assessed higher than what I could sell it for; and we need help.

Michael Potts said the high taxes are pushing his family out of this County, opined the County should bulldoze the old Courthouse, and thanked the Board for their time.

Park Pilikian recalled at the last hearing it was noted this system is broken, businesses are planning on leaving, asked the people to become involved to force the Board to fix what is broken, and asked the Board to tell them what they plan to do.

Steve Bales said the Board can't change the past but they can change the budget, a reduction is needed, property values will be down next year along with revenues, and asked the Board to do something to keep the people here.

Eugene Pentuck said he has a home in Punta Gorda, and he's e-mailed the Governor about the need for change because we can't wait until the end of 2007. Mr. Pentuck commented on the proposed jail expansion, on the proposed detox facility, and suggested the beds should be made a permanent part of the new beds for the jail. Mr. Pentuck commented on the feed the children program, said Florida is one of the critical states, and he'd rather feed the children than fix the drunks.

Jan Sommers said she has a lot in South Gulf Cove which went from \$45,000 to \$200,000, she intended to build her home here and move their business here but she doesn't think she'll be able to do it and may have to stay in Sarasota County instead.

Gene Leapley said he doesn't understand what's going on, the budget is increasing way too fast, opined they're not being fair to those who want to move here, and asked the Board to find good reasons for what they're doing.

Dave Zimmerman commented on the situation of Flamingo Boulevard in his neighborhood which is full of potholes, said he was told no money was being allowed for repairs and he'd like to know where his money is going, a stop sign is needed at Flamingo and S.R. 776, and Veterans Boulevard doesn't drain correctly after heavy rains.

JoDee Trost said she's lived in Punta Gorda for three years but now small businesses are being run out, businesses are being forced to close due to the increasing taxes, and asked the Board to try to cut the budget.

Debbie Bales noted all the non-homesteaded property owners are being heavily taxed, insurance rates are so high, said people feel they're being held hostage by the high taxes, people don't mind paying their fair share but not at the expense of a lower standard of living, opined there are cuts that can be made, and asked the Board to do whatever they can to reduce the proposed budget.

Neal Boursch said he's going out of business, people are afraid to come to this area due to past storms and red tide, and posed a number of questions he's faced with due to the increasing property taxes and insurance costs.

Brian Furry said Hurricane Charley took his house but his taxes are still going through the roof.

Amos Slater opined the state isn't going to do anything soon, people are worried about being able to pay their upcoming taxes and still be able to survive for the next 12 months, it's up to the Board to protect the residents and asked the Board to help the residents and business owners who provide jobs.

Donna Greve said she owns a number of rental properties but she can't continue to pass on the escalating taxes to her renters, she can't sell her properties for what she paid for them, and opined this will continue to hurt her and all of Charlotte County.

David Goodrich opined the Board can't spend what it doesn't have, said the Board has to live within it's means, proposed new capital projects don't have to be the most fancy just practical, and asked the Board to stop and think how they're spending the people's money.

**COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DEBOER.  
Motion Carried 4:0.  
ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

Mr. Sandrock responded to public input, said the millage rate has been reduced, he couldn't address the issue of non-homesteaded property, there are many areas to the budget, commented on reasons that result in an increased budget, and commented on the funding sources for the capital projects.

Mr. Loucks responded to the issue of impact fees funding new construction.

### Board Discussion and Action

**Commissioner D'Aprile** agreed you shouldn't spend money you don't have, said he understands where the people are coming from, all the Board members want to find solutions to increasing costs, responded to the comments on the proposed detox facility, and opined people need to make sure they have all the information such as with the Devil Rays that won't be costing the County any money.

**Commissioner D'Aprile** said they're all doing the best job they can, property values didn't increase because of something the Board did but were driven by the market, agreed they need to protect the business owners because there's no cap but that can only be corrected legislatively, and apologized to those who feel the Board is being unfair.

**COMMISSIONER DEBOER MOVED TO CUT THE PROPOSED COUNTYWIDE MILLAGE RATE BY AN ADDITIONAL 0.425 MILLS (0.25 MILLS OUT OF THE GENERAL FUND, 0.15 MILLS OUT OF THE CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND, AND 0.025 MILLS OUT OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY FUND), SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER D'APRILE.**

**Motion Failed 2:2. Commissioner Cummings, and Chairman Moore opposing.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

*Commissioner DeBoer said the only ones not talking about doing with less is this government, the rollback rate was nearly 33% above last year, and summarized the reductions being proposed were not to cut existing services but to reduce increases to existing services, and opined that wasn't going to make things better for anyone.*

**COMMISSIONER DEBOER MOVED TO DIRECT STAFF TO BRING BACK TO THE BOARD A SAVE OUR HOMES AND BUSINESS ORDINANCE CAPPING PROPERTY TAX INCREASES ON IMPROVED PROPERTIES TO NO MORE 15% PER YEAR, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER D'APRILE.**

*Commissioner D'Aprile said that's exactly what he was hoping for, and his second was on the condition that staff will evaluate this percentage and how it will impact them in their next budget, even though he was looking for an even larger number like maybe 30%.*

*Chairman Moore said he's not sure if they can legally do that, and he can't vote for that but he did feel the County has some serious problems many of which he felt were out of their control.*

*Commissioner Cummings said there's a legitimate concern since the County's economy is retirement and tourist based, they need to facilitate those small businesses but the issue covered by the motion of a new cap is too important to decide tonight, and nothing they do tonight will fix the problem.*

*Commissioner D'Aprile agreed maybe the motion is too premature but they must address this issue or there will be a massive exodus from this community, opined they have the authority to do this, and asked the Commissioner if there was a way to modify the motion to include research on this issue for next year.*

*Commissioner DeBoer* said he didn't expect the motion to pass, and he appreciated the Commissioner's support but at this time he would rather just call the question.

**Motion Failed 2:2. Commissioner Cummings, and Chairman Moore opposing.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

*Commissioner DeBoer* noted that he'd just given everyone the framework for a citizens' initiative in the state of Florida to keep local government from raising their taxes more than 15% a year.

**COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-186 FOR A COUNTYWIDE MILLAGE RATE OF 4.8409, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS.**

*Commissioner Cummings* stated tonight they are setting a standard millage rate for the entire County, commented on property valuations, and opined the Board sympathizes with the property owners but they can't fix it tonight with the millage rate because it has be done by changing the balance between those who have homestead protection on their property and those that don't.

*Commissioner D'Aprile* said he agreed with the Commissioner's concept but he's trying to find a solution to help the business people.

**Motion Carried 3:1. Commissioner DeBoer opposing.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

**COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-187 FOR A COUNTYWIDE BUDGET OF \$85,238,427, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS.**

**Motion Carried 3:1. Commissioner DeBoer opposing.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

**RECESS: 6:39 PM - 6:50 PM**

**II. AD VALOREM - MUNICIPAL SERVICE TAXING UNITS - MSTUS**

Mr. Sandrock read into the record the proposed budgets and millage rates for each of the MSTUs as listed on pages 3 and 4 of the agenda, and stated the proposed "aggregate" County millage rate is 6.4189 mills, which is 32.78% over the current year "aggregate" rolled-back rate of 4.8342 mills.

**Public Comment**

David Goodrich said the millage comes down but his taxes go up, the average worker or retiree can't afford it, and cuts have to be made.

Joan Fischer said she didn't see much change in the MSBU/MSTUs, the Board shouldn't turn things against those with homesteads, and reiterated she didn't see any effort to make reductions.

Joan Pilikian said she'd spoken at the last hearing, she didn't see the Board trying to make reductions, the people need to see something positive being done, asked the Board to please do something, and pointed out people are trapped because they can't afford to lose their homestead.

**COMMISSIONER DEBOER MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS.**

**Motion Carried 4:0.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

Mr. Sandrock responded to comments regarding the MSTU/MSBUs discussed at the Tentatorium.

**Board Discussion and Action**

**COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-188 ADOPTING MILLAGE RATES FOR THE AD VALOREM DISTRICTS, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER D'APRILE.**

**Motion Carried 3:1. Commissioner DeBoer opposing.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-189 ADOPTING THE BUDGETS FOR THE AD VALOREM DISTRICTS, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER D'APRILE.

Motion Carried 3:1. Commissioner DeBoer opposing.

ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.

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

Mr. Sandrock stated the applicable proposed budgets for these MSBUs were listed on pages 5, 6 and 7 of the agenda totaling \$433,572,966 and do not need to be read individually into the record.

Chairman Moore said he thought there was supposed to be relief for Farabee Road Capital.

Commissioner D'Aprile stated he'd looked into the Farabee Road Capital Improvement Program, it was his suggestion to charge the truckers and dirt haulers a certain amount per load but he hasn't heard anything, and he would like to pull this until it's resolved.

COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO PULL FARABEE ROAD STREET & DRAINAGE CAPITAL, SECONDED BY CHAIRMAN MOORE.

Commissioner DeBoer opined the problem won't go away or be resolved by a surtax but said he'll support the motion.

Chairman Moore agreed this isn't a new problem but said he'll support the motion to try one more time to resolve this issue.

Commissioner Cummings said he'll go along with what appears to be Board consensus.

Motion Carried 4:0.

ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.

Mr. Sandrock read into the record the revised figures for the three main categories: A. Special Revenue Funds (Non-MSBU) - \$150,874,786; B. Proprietary/Enterprise Funds - \$205,925,783; and C. Special Revenue Funds - MSBUs - \$76,178,118 after removing Farabee Road (Capital). Mr. Sandrock stated the total of these three areas after adjusting for Farabee Road (Capital) is \$432,078,687, and the revised Countywide Budget is \$992,582,091.

### Public Comment

Joan Fischer spoke in support of those MSBUs that have great leadership and so have accomplished great things but said she was still against MSBUs, and opined the Board needs to find a better way.

Douglas Tucker said he has no problem paying his taxes as long as he sees his tax dollars working for him but there are drainage problems in front of his house, staff has told him there are no problems but his house wasn't addressed, and asked the Board to help get this fixed.

Kendall Leach commented on the expenses for Rotonda Sands and Rotonda Meadows which he felt could be quite a bit less do to the inclusion of a 25% contingency fee.

**COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DEBOER.**

**Motion Carried 4:0.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

### Board Discussion and Action

**COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-190 - AMENDING RESOLUTION 2006-172 SETTING ASSESSMENT RATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006-2007 FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFITS UNITS WITH THE CORRECTION FOR FARABEE ROAD CAPITAL REDUCING THE ASSESSMENT RATE TO \$0 , SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DEBOER.**

**Motion Carried 4:0.**

**ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.**

COMMISSIONER D'APRILE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2006-191  
ADOPTING THE BUDGETS OF THE REMAINING NON-AD VALOREM FUNDS WITH  
THE CORRECTION FOR FARABEE ROAD CAPITAL BUDGET AMOUNT TO  
\$0, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CUMMINGS.

Motion Carried 4:0.

ABSENT: District 5 Commissioner.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 7:18 PM

Signature on file in Commission Minutes  
Chairman Moore

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

/ksm