

MARLBORO COUNTY COUNCIL  
"CALLED" MEETING  
MARLBORO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP BUILDING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2022

11:30 AM

CHAIRMAN

CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR

VICE CHAIRMAN  
CLERK TO COUNCIL  
COUNTY ATTORNEY

JASON STEEN  
SUSAN RIVERS \*  
ANDREW MCLEOD

COUNCIL:  
JASON STEEN  
CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR.  
KENNETH STROMAN \*  
STEVE BLACKMON, AND

DR. DAMIEN JOHNSON  
CORRIE H. PLATO  
VERD ODOM  
ANTHONY WOODS

Others present were Mr. Steve Pollard, IT Director.

A copy of the agenda was posted on the front door of the William P. Wallace, Sr. Administration Building, Marlboro County Website, and sent to the Marlboro Herald Advocate.

INVOCATION – Mr. Anthony Woods

EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Motion made by Mr. Jason Steen, seconded by Mr. Anthony Woods, to enter into executive session for the Discussion of Contractual, Legal and Economic Development Matters. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion Carried.**

**Motion made by Ms. Corrie Plato, seconded by Mr. Verd Odom, to leave executive session and return to open session. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion Carried.**

NEW BUSINESS RESULTING FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Midgley advised that during the Executive Session that economic development Project Leapfrog was discussed. Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator requested approval for the

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purchase and improvement of land for Project Leapfrog in an amount not to exceed \$350,000. Mr. Munnerlyn stated a motion and vote was needed to approve this decision.

**Motion made by Mr. Verd Odom, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon to approve the purchase and improvement of property for Project Leapfrog in an amount not to exceed \$350,000. All in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS

None

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Administrator Munnerlyn advised staff was working under the assumption that Council was going to approve the increase for the solid waste roll cart service. Fee for properties receiving Homestead Exemptions would increase from \$175 to \$185 annually; all other properties with dwellings would increase from \$205 to \$235 annually. The new fee structure reduces the amount the General Fund is subsidizing solid waste service and thereby reduce usage of the reserve fund and possibly "free up" tax millage currently being used. The revised charges will be for 3 years.

Staff then presented a budget worksheet with no budget requests included except things that were unavoidable and mandatory such as cost of living salary increases for employees. Mr. Anthony Woods questioned why it was so high. Mr. Munnerlyn responded that the cost of living increases could be taken out but he thought that with cost of inflation, it was the consensus of council to make this a high priority.

With the cost of living increase and other mandatory or unavoidable increases but no other budget requests Council will need to take \$574,000 out of reserve. He reminded Council that they had discussed using about \$350,000 to \$450,000 out of reserve. In previous years, the reserve funds were budgeted but not completely used due to significant position vacancies. Currently, there are fewer vacancies due to better salaries, etc... With this reduction in vacancies, it is important to reduce the budgeted use of reserves to a target of \$350,000. Council needs to be aware that even with a Ouija board it is difficult to predict where the County will be in 6 months. Inflation is hard to predict, we need to protect the fund balance for use in a recession caused situation.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated that some of council was not around in 2008 when council had to put employees on furlough. He did not want them to think he is suggesting they do this but he did not want to do this again.

In the last year, Council has had to do a lot of amendments to the budget. Hopefully, they have addressed the things causing this as mid-year budget amendments must be minimized.

If Council is only doing the mandatory increases like insurance, along with the fuel increase cost, and the Cost of Living for the employees, we will need a 3.5 mil tax increase. With that being said, if Council commits to what was discussed, there would be \$350,000 to be used out of reserve.

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There was some discussion and ideas thrown out about taking \$400,000 while they were working with \$450,000 from reserve. They have also been looking at \$475,000 however, staff may be able to find somewhere in the middle council can work with. He asked council to keep this in mind.

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Mr. Munnerlyn provided a chart showing the budget requests being recommended: 3 additional Deputy positions with benefits (\$156,000 – 2.4 mils; 3 new vehicles for Sheriff’s Department through lease (\$19,286 - .3 mils); Increase base salary of all Detention Center by \$3,000 (\$60,000 - .92 mils) which will be taken care of the federal inmate funds coming in; Salary increase/create corporal positions for MCSD (\$10,200 - .2 mils); and Field data collectors for Tax Assessor office (\$55,000 - .9 mils).

If all budget requests are approved a 8.2 mil tax increase would be required to hit the \$350,000 for the reserve target; or a 7.5 mil increase with \$400,000 from reserve.

He stated that the various requests that can be taken out during the work session to see the impact Mr. Munnerlyn noted that S.C. Act 388 sets maximum allowable tax increases... The State sets the percentage increase allowed each year based on inflation; if you don’t use the increase you can carry forward for 3 years. Council had not used the allowable increase in 3 years.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman joined the meeting at 1:30 pm.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised the county currently has 8.5 mils based on: 2020-2021 – 1.8%; 2021-2022 – 1.23%; and 2022-2023 – 4.7%. The maximum that council can increase the millage is 8.5%.

Munnerlyn noted that is nothing included in the budget and if the maximum millage increase was used, there would be no millage left for operating costs for expanded services like recreation.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised Council of what the General Fund Millage increases would be per 1 tax mil. He advised that 1 mil = \$65,000 in revenue. He provided a chart showing the amount of the Tax bill increases for every 1 tax mill increase. The increases per tax appraised value of the property were:

Property Appraisal	Legal	(Rental, business, etc)
\$50,000	\$ 2.00	\$ 3.00
\$60,000	\$ 2.40	\$ 3.60
\$70,000	\$ 2.80	\$ 4.20
\$80,000	\$ 3.20	\$ 4.80
\$90,000	\$ 3.60	\$ 5.40
\$100,000	\$ 4.00	\$ 6.00
\$110,000	\$ 4.40	\$ 6.60
\$120,000	\$ 4.80	\$ 7.20
\$130,000	\$ 5.20	\$ 7.80

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\$140,000	\$	5.60	\$	8.40
\$150,000	\$	6.00	\$	9.00

At the request of Chairman Midgley, Mr. Munnerlyn provided Council with an Excel worksheet which showed the impact with the budget amendments or category overruns for the current fiscal year compared to the next fiscal year for the Sheriff Department and Detention Center. The current year was a total of \$322,449 compared to \$473,718 for the next fiscal year.

He said he didn't know of any easy way to proceed with the workshop except to respond to Council's input and revise the chart to show how the changes would impact tax millage and reserve usage.

Mr. Munnerlyn provided a Chart for the FY 2022 – 2023 General Fund Operating Budget Worksheet. The chart showed all budget requests and additional expenses as included in the draft budget. The reserve needed is \$408,260 while the target is \$350,000.

Mr. Anthony Woods asked if the chart shows the budget with the 8.5 increase. Mr. Munnerlyn stated yes.

Mr. Steve Blackmon stated council needed to get the tax mills down. He would like some help from everybody as to how they can do it to cause the least harm to everyone.

Mr. Verd Odom asked what the increase would be for someone with a house valued at \$100,000. Mr. Munnerlyn responded he thought it was \$32. On a \$100,000 house, it would be \$4 per mil for a house you live in. He then confirmed it was \$32 and \$48 for other (rental properties and commercial).

Mr. Woods asked if they could post the budget in the newspaper in simpler language so the citizens could understand it. This way it could relieve a lot of phone calls to the Administrator and to Council as well. He did not know where they could cut anything, they needed law enforcement. They also needed to be more competitive for the Detention Center. They do not need to lose more employees leaving for more money. It's "catch 22".

Mr. Jason Steen stated that \$32 may not sound like a whole lot. However, he and Dr. Johnson had spoken a few moments ago and for people on a fixed income, which is already upside down, a \$32 increase puts them in a "what am I going to do" to survive the next month state of mind. When they don't have enough money to live on now, when you don't have \$20, it's hard. Years ago it did not make much difference. He agreed with what Mr. Blackmon said. Council is going to have to make some hard decisions and get the millage down just a little bit.

Mr. Odom asked what impact it would have cutting the request for additional deputies down to 3.

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Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman asked if taking out a car and a deputy to be a total of 2 additional, would it take the increase down by 1 mil. Should this be about \$65,000? Mr. Munnerlyn stated the car would not make a big difference because it will be a lease.

He asked in trying to find things they could agree on, was everyone comfortable with taking \$400,000 out of reserve. Mr. Blackmon stated he was agreeable to \$400,000.

Mr. Munnerlyn then revised the Excel worksheet to show where taking \$400,000 from reserve would bring mils down to 6.3. Mr. Steve Blackmon asked did this include only 2 deputies? Mr. Munnerlyn responded it included 2 deputies and 2 cars.

Mr. Odom stated this would be \$24 on a \$100,000 house in place of \$32. Mr. Odom stated that \$32 wouldn't make a big deal to them, but getting it down to the \$20's would help those on a fixed income. Mr. Blackmon said if they could at least get it down to 6% it would help. Dr. Johnson questioned with the deputies, did Mr. Munnerlyn change the numbers on the chart. Mr. Munnerlyn advised that he had changed the numbers to 2 deputies. At this time the chart showed 2 deputies and 2 cars.

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr. asked if all vacant Sheriff Office positions were currently filled. Mr. Munnerlyn responded they still needed a couple, but Sheriff McNeil is doing a good job in filling vacancies.

He told council that if you are going into a multi-year recession, of which they could very well be doing, you have to think of what budget increases are going to be recurring charges in subsequent years.

Mr. Midgley asked if we cut it down to 1 deputy and 1 car, would this help? Dr. Johnson stated it wouldn't be worth it.

Mr. Woods stated he would like to see what the numbers would be if you take out the \$10,200 amount for Sheriff's Department corporal positions and leave just the salary increases. Mr. Munnerlyn responded that it wouldn't make much of a difference. Mr. Woods suggested taking out everything for the Detention Center except the corporal position. Where would this bring them? Mr. Munnerlyn stated that would make a difference, it would probably bring it down by 1 mil.

Mr. Munnerlyn said that with keeping the 2 deputies, 2 cars, salaries at the Detention Center (could do only part of it), they could get with the Sheriff and see which parts are the most important. This would bring the budget to 5.5 mils.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated this was short sighted and he did not want to shut the place down. He thought it was short sighted.

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Dr. Johnson questioned that instead of taking the Detention Center salary increases out, could they just decrease it to possible \$2,000 per position. He stated the employees at the Detention Center worked hard and they deserved it. He wanted to know what the mills would be if you decreased the amount to \$2,000.

Mr. Munnerlyn said he would back Dr. Johnson up on the need to increase starting salaries for Detention Center officers, but, he would be more inclined to stay at \$2,500 per position. He said that for years the Detention Center employees, more so than the Sheriff's Department, have been grossly underpaid. Mr. Munnerlyn wanted to remind everyone that they had increased the Detention Center salaries by \$2,000 or \$3,000 at this time last year. Mr. Munnerlyn also reminded them that their overtime also went to time and a half. It was his opinion that Council could focus more on the guys on the floor than the people higher up for continued increases.

Mr. Munnerlyn said he assumed that if they approved that amount, the Sheriff would work with them to make an impact. He said this has been neglected for a long time.

He wanted to remind Council that the last year before the change in Sheriffs, Council had made some extensive amount of increases with the overtime and salaries. Unfortunately, when they did the Sheriff switch, they looked at the changes and it still was not enough. They had to do more.

Mr. Steen said it was almost like with the allowable tax increase percentages which they had not used in the last 3 years, if they had gone up then, they would now have a 3 mil difference. They could have saved money. It's hard to project the future.

Mr. Munnerlyn said he was going to be defensive of Council about that comment. He stated that when they sat down to work on the budget this year, there was almost a million dollars of additional revenue predicted for the next fiscal year. However, the money had already been spent on the changes and budget amendments for the previous year. He stated he was not saying these changes were not necessary, but that he wanted to make a point again that the county had a million dollars of additional revenue but, it was already spent.

Mr. Steen asked to see the top part of the spreadsheet again. Mr. Munnerlyn pulled the chart back up and advised these were just some of the expenses along with the mandatory things (which have already been built into the budget). He stated they did some overtime and some compensation changes for the Sheriff and Detention Center last year. He stated that when Council does this, the county has to then pay for a full 12 months of it the next year. That's where the increases on the sheet came from.

In the current fiscal year the Sheriff's Department got new body cameras which is a perfect example. He got those through grant funds, however, the operating contract is \$30,000 a year which had to be included in next year's budget.

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Mr. Woods questioned whether Mr. Munnerlyn could speak with the Sheriff to see which ones he prefers, the deputies or the adjustment for the Detention Center needs. He stated that Council needed to make sure that the tax mils for the whole county are not that high.

Dr. Johnson asked if they decreased the \$60,000 for Detention Center salary adjustments down to \$40,000, how would this impact the total additional tax mils? Mr. Munnerlyn advised he thought this would bring the mils down to 5.7. He thought that they could manage the \$10,200 for corporal positions in the Sheriff's Department because during the year they normally have employees leaving for other positions and this provides extra money. He thought this was something he thought staff could manage. He said he knew this did not help them much, but, it was something he could work out. Mr. Munnerlyn verified that these changes would bring the mils down to 5.6.

Mr. Woods stated this looked a lot better than what it was.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated that one of them had asked him about what the schools were doing with regards to tax millage in their next fiscal year budget. He stated that Superintendent Andrews had advised him that they were not going to raise taxes. Munnerlyn said the City of Bennettsville had gone up in taxes, however, they have never passed the budget for the current year. They have to, but, they haven't done it yet. The City went up the maximum that they could, but, last year they went up more than they were allowed. He advised Council they needed to keep in mind that last year when the county did the re-evaluation, Council went down on the mils in accordance with state law. The county tried up, the City didn't.

Dr. Johnson stated that considering that Council had not raised the mils in the last 3 years and for adjustments last year, he thought the number now being displayed were okay. He said he did not want to pay anymore, but, if he needed to pay more, he was willing to. He said he knew that no matter what council did, someone was going to be disappointed. Everybody is not going to be happy with this. Mr. Munnerlyn stated that even if they did a negative amount, they would probably still complain about it. Dr. Johnson said this was also an unprecedented time with the inflation. Things could get worse or they could get better.

Mr. Blackmon said it was close. Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr. said he really didn't want to go more than 4 mils but he didn't see where they could cut it any more. He asked the other Council Members their thoughts. He thought they were at a good place.

Mr. Blackmon said he wanted to see 5 mils, but, he wasn't going to be unreasonable. He didn't want to pay more either, but he didn't mind paying a little more if they were going to get more. He wanted to be confident that Council was doing the best they could for the citizens also. He said they are currently working it pretty close, but, he would like to see it at 5, but, he did understand where they were at.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated it shows that Council are good stewards with the citizen's money. He said he knew they were hashing out about the .6 mils at \$60,000 per mil. But he thought it was

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important to go down to the details. He wanted the people that watched those things, talked with them, or read the newspaper to know that he had gone down to the details. Even if they looked at it over and over again and think it's perfect, it's always going to be wrong one way or the other, but, it's going to be less wrong. He had looked over it many times. Staff has gone over it and he truly believes in the power of the people that work there and have knowledge of this. They have thoroughly gone through the budget. They have put it up on the screen and looked at every budget item. He advised that he had personally gone over it again that morning. His intent was to go over it the following Monday and hopefully, they have not missed anything. There was a chance that it may come down a little, but, he doesn't see where it would come down below 5 mils with what they currently have in changes.

Mr. Blackmon said he would be pleased with the 5 mils. If they could get it anywhere near that, he believes they are hitting it pretty close. He thought they were doing the right thing for everybody in the county.

Mr. Woods stated that with the increase they had not had in 3 years, what would happen if they did not have enough money for payroll. He stated that with the gas prices, if they came down, he would be happy. He stated the county needs protection from the Sheriff's Department, because every time they have a situation, they get asked why. He thought the salary increases for the deputies was very important but, if staff can get the 5.6 % down to 5 that would be great. If they couldn't, it would still be Okay. It would only be about \$2. He said he could live with that because it's better than they were before. They were at 8 mils when the workshop started and they have been able cut the budget by 3 mils.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated that his biggest concern was with the inflation. He had to say that if it goes bad, it's going to go bad a whole lot more than they have seen yet. Mr. Woods stated they didn't need to go to the reserve anymore.

Mr. Odom said he was fine with it. They needed to have more empathy for the public. The public needs to know that the county has not gone up in the last 3 years. Mr. Munnerlyn advised him they could only go back 3 years, however, he knew there were other years they had not gone up. Mr. Odom stated that as Dr. Johnson had said, we are in unprecedented times. It's the type of inflation that we are having: gas, medicine, food, everything which is affecting the families.

Mr. Munnerlyn said he wanted to ask a question proceed with finalizing the budget... He asked if everyone was agreeable with 2 deputies and 2 cars; with the base salary adjustment at the Detention Center being decreased from \$60,000 to \$40,000?

He stated he wanted to avoid Council saying they could live with the 5.5 mils, however, what if he was able to find something they could pay in this this fiscal year's budget due to savings would Council come back and want to start all over because we have more money and want more deputies or are they going to let them proceed?



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Mr. Blackmon stated he thought they were here to make a decision so Mr. Munnerlyn could move forward. Mr. Munnerlyn asked again that if for some reason they were able to find some money that just fell out of the sky, are they going to let him proceed with trying to move the budget so it could come down to the 5 mils.

Mr. Stroman said that the 5.5 mils was pretty close to 5 mils and like Mr. Blackmon had said, they needed to do as much as they could so the citizens could see they had already taken in the reality of everything they had already done for the Sheriff's Department over the past 1 ½ years. The citizens should be real pleased with anything they do at this point because of the situation of what the economy is in. He said "everybody is sacrificing. Everybody."

Mr. Odom stated that nobody knew what was coming down the pipeline. It could be worse. He believed that Council did the best they could.

Mr. Munnerlyn said that the state provides funding 4 times a year. They will get the final funds for the year in June, the last month of the quarter. There is no way of knowing what will be received. They may come in short or they may come in high, however, if were able to come in high, he would rather have it go towards less reserve and if Council agrees with 2 deputies, 2 vehicles, and the other requests they discussed, he will build the budget to those figures. Munnerlyn stated that unless something happens to the negative and is the budget will require more than the 5.5 mils, he will bring that back to council to consider.

Mr. Stroman said he was ready to commit to this. They are responsible to the citizens. It's Council's task to make sure the county is healthy, so he agrees with the current figures.

Mr. Steen stated that he was in agreement. They had worked hard to get it down to where it is and that's good. It seems like everybody is on the same page. Everyone wants to do what is best and looking out for the tax payers too. He thought they could build to this budget and proceed. Dr. Johnson and Mr. Blackmon agreed.

Mr. Munnerlyn said he thought that was good. He could take it and proceed. Mr. Midgley, Chairman requested that Mr. Munnerlyn leave the screen where it was at so he could review it.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised that it was his practice to save a copy of the worksheet they had used so that if Council were to ask him next year what it was, he could show them. He also advised he could provide them this information by email after the meeting so they see where they were. If something crazy did happen, he would make them aware of it.

#### RECREATION NEXT STEPS

Mr. Munnerlyn advised he would have the information ready for them at the Tuesday meeting.

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ADJOURN

**Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Dr. Damien Johnson, to adjourn the meeting. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion Carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:15.

(SEAL)



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Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman  
Marlboro County Council

ATTEST:



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Susan Rivers, Clerk  
Marlboro County Council

Adopted: July 12, 2022