

**PUBLIC HEARING
BIBB COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 22, 2007 - 10:00 A.M.
COMMISSIONERS BOARDROOM**

A public hearing of the Bibb County Board of Commissioners was held on Friday, June 22, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. regarding the proposed FY 2008 Budget.

Commissioners present were Chairman Charles W. Bishop, Commissioner Bert Bivins, III and Commissioner Joe O. Allen.

Commissioner Elmo A. Richardson, Jr. was absent.

Staff in attendance was Steve Layson, Chief Administrative Officer; Virgil Adams, County Attorney; Deborah Martin, Finance Director; Christy Iuliucci, Assistant Finance Director; Ken Sheets, County Engineer; Shelia Thurmond, Clerk of the Board; Barbara Wood, Public Affairs; Janice Ross, Administrative Assistant to Chairman of the Board; Rhonda Scott, Administrative Assistant to CAO.

Others in attendance were Sheriff Jerry Modena, Bibb County LEC; Dianne Brannen, Clerk of Superior Court; Carolyn Bishop; Maurice Atkinson; Don Faulk, President/CEO of the Medical Center; Mr. Edward Jones.

News Media in attendance was Adrianna Hopkins, FOX 24; Heather Graf, 41 WMGT; Keich Whicker, The Telegraph.

Chairman Bishop called the Hearing to order and stating that the purpose was to strictly to listen to input from citizens regarding the proposed FY 2008 budget. He also stated that the budget document has been available in the Finance Department since June 13th. He stated that in compliance with the law, the Commissioners are here today to listen to citizens who have concerns with the budget that has been presented and for that purpose only.

Chairman Bishop then noted that there were four (4) people who indicated they wanted to speak. He called them by name as follows: Mr. David Corr, Dr. Richard Elliott, Mr. Alan Thiese and Mr. Louie Hargrove.

The first speaker was Mr. David Corr. An excerpt of Mr. Corr's comments is as follows:

"First of all, I want to thank all the Commissioners for all the hard work on the budget. I'm certainly not here to bash anybody. I know you all worked very hard on the budget and I know you all want to do what's right by the citizens. Of course, I do have some concerns. Government is about the basics. And the basics of government, quite frankly, are very limited and what they're limited to is protecting the life, liberty and property rights of citizens against those who were violated through force or fraud. That would mean other citizens; that would also mean when government violates our life, liberty and property rights through force or fraud. In relation to that, the only thing government really should fund is limited and that would be limited to the Police, on the

Federal level – the Military, Fire, Court and arguably, the Roads. Anything else is getting away from the basics.

Now, this budget has a 1 mill tax increase that is going to cost taxpayers \$3.4 million if my figures are correct. Keich Whicker did an excellent article in The Telegraph Friday, June 8th which pointed out that \$10 million is being spent for 24 different agencies, none of which has anything to do with police, fire, courts or roads, with the possible exception of the National Guard which actually does – it has to do with the Military. Just look at some of these things: Adult Literacy Program – \$256,000; Macon-Bibb County Board of Health - \$762,000; Booker T. Washington Community Center - \$16,650; Citizens Advocacy - \$4,950; Macon Arts Council - \$54,000. Of course, government shouldn't be in the arts period, shouldn't censor it or fund it. Macon Economic Development Commission - \$34,750; Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority - \$300,000; Meals on Wheels - \$48,000; Museum of Arts & Sciences - \$352,855; Planning & Zoning Commission - \$394,000. Houston, Texas doesn't even have a Planning and Zoning Commission and they get by quite fine without one. Middle Georgia Regional Development Center - \$59,178; Transit Authority - \$739,119; Tubman Museum - \$352,855. Mr. Corr then quoted some *words of Walter Williams as it pertains to the taking of one person's rights or property to give to another*. So, I would simply encourage you rather than raise taxes yet again on the citizens of Macon. We've reached a saturation point – people are leaving the county. They are going to Jones County, Monroe County, Houston County, Clayton County. We're the one city and county that's not growing in comparison with a lot of others in the State. If the citizens have this money in their pocket they can use it for the things they need – to grow businesses, to start businesses, to pay the gas that they need in their cars at \$3.00 a gallon, to educate their children – send them to a private school, go on vacation. There are a lot of things that families can use this money in their pocket for and that would grow the economy. A lot of people justify this type of spending saying, well, it improves the quality of life. Well, it doesn't for the people that the money is being taken from. It hurts them. It hurts economic growth and it hurts our community because people don't want to open businesses here like they would if we didn't do that. They don't want to live here.

All I'm saying is take a look at these 24 agencies; take a look at this \$10 million; take a look at what Mr. Allen is talking about – about not necessarily having to fund these whether it's OPEB (?) to the extent it's being funded. Take a look at ways we can cut this and don't raise property taxes. We don't have to do it, we don't need to do it. Let's don't do this to our citizens. Thank you very much.”

The second speaker was Dr. Richard Elliott. An excerpt of Dr. Elliott's comments is as follows:

“I'm a physician in town and I'm to speak particularly to the County's contribution to the funding of indigent care at the Medical Center. I have not reviewed the entire budget, only that particular item. And I want to say at the outset that the Medical Center gives outstanding care. We've had a good deal of our family care at the Medical Center, I personally have, and we've been very pleased with it. Indigent Care is something important to me, personally. I spend Wednesday mornings, every week, at the Anderson Clinic seeing the uninsured. It's something that I think is a professional obligation and so I'm strongly supportive of that. We went something like this a couple of years ago and we're hearing the same sorts of things now and it scares me. A couple of years ago, there was a 10% cut, about \$475,000 to the Medical Center as a result of which, the Medical Center said they could not afford such cuts and they, immediately, I think within hours, or at least a day or so, cut the pharmacy in half and that cause a good deal of

distress to a good many patients and I saw it. At the time they said they couldn't afford it and you can look this up for yourself, their assets had increased by 22% from 2003 to 2005. That's over \$100 million.

What I'm hear to say is that if you hear such things as, *well, there's not enough money for indigent care, we're going to have to cut services, we're going to have to pass on these costs to third parties*, that's just not true. There's plenty of money for indigent care. People don't believe it. You can look it up. I'll be glad to give you websites; I'll be glad to hand over this thick sheaf of documents. Other people have gone through it. There is an excess of probably at least \$15 million in the system right now for indigent care. When you figure out the \$25 million the Feds are paying, maybe another \$15 million from the State, other sources of contributions and funding and not even including Bibb County's, there's plenty of money in the system. And then you put in the 501(c) 3 value which is at least another \$15 million dollars. There's money in the system now; there is no need to cut services or to pass on additional cost to those who are insured.

I am not here to advocate for an increase or decrease in funding. I am here only to advocate that whatever funding this county provides for indigent care that there be some sort of monitoring of this, some sort of accountability for this care so that services can't be cut arbitrarily; the clinics can't be closed; pharmacies can be reduced without some sort of accounting for you men of the Commission – so you know what you're paying and you know whether or not you're getting it. That's all I'm here to say. Thank you.”

The third speaker was Mr. Alan Thiese. Mr. Thiese read from a printed statement, a *copy of which is attached hereto.*

The fourth and final speaker was Mr. Louie Hargrove. An excerpt of Mr. Hargrove's comments is as follows:

“I just basically want this for the record because I going to take what I'm about to say to the U.S. Attorney's Office. It's concerning River Edge, one of the County's outside agencies. I know for a fact that River Edge has been brought up on Medicaid fraud and Medicare fraud in the past and they are still doing it. I worked over there 18 years and Frank Fields, the Executive Director, terminated me and it is in court now. He said it was a business decision – because I speak out. I know he is misappropriating money and I have documents to back up what I say and I can show you where they still FICA and Medicare. He wanted me to do that but I wouldn't do it. I know the games but I don't play them today. And the money that you all are giving him – what he's doing is taking it over to Baldwin County and spending it over there when he should be spending it on the people under the bridge and those trying to sleep in the Terminal Station, but he's not doing it. So, I want you all, as County Commissioners, which I am a citizen of Macon-Bibb County, to monitor and make this man be accountable for the money that you all give him. The money is needed but it shouldn't be in Frank Fields' hands – him and his buddies. And I know for a fact he's giving people over there raises that spy and grab him by the tail and run behind him. I get calls every evening. People over there are scared to speak out and the reason for that is because, over there, they hire and fire at will. He's discriminating against people; he's got the wrong people in positions. It's a buddy-buddy system. I thought they cut that out but when they passed HB 100, they brought it right back into play. Frank is a parasite; he feeds off other people. And I can back up what I'm saying. I don't have any malice in my heart for this man but I want him to do the right thing because I'm going to survive. So, I'm asking you all to look at and investigate this

man and like I said earlier, I'm going to take it to the U.S. Attorney. I have been doing this for over a year – this researching and talking to people. I think May 19th, when they called me out the field and took me to the personnel office and told me I was terminated. They tried to say that I was falsifying documentation and travel vouchers – 35 cent a mile. You think I will put 18 years on the line for that? They think they can do that and get away with it but they're messing with the wrong one. Thank you for your time.”

Chairman Bishop thanked everyone for coming and stated the public hearing was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

Shelia Thurmond, Clerk of the Board

Attachment (Mr. Alan Thiese's comments)