

**CITY OF METTER
PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE INCREASE
PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2017
10:00 A.M.**

A public hearing was held at City Hall on Wednesday, August 9, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers.

Attending the hearing were the following officials:

Mayor Billy Trapnell
Councilman Ed Boyd
Councilwoman Marsha Colson
Councilman Paul MacGregor
City Manager Mandi Cody
City Clerk Angie Conner
Fire Chief Jason Douglas
Finance Manager Cindy Collins
Carvy Snell, Metter Advertiser

Attending the hearing were the following guests:

Mr. & Mrs. Alton Slater

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mayor Trapnell called the hearing to order and welcomed everyone.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the hearing was to present the tentatively adopted 2017 millage rate which will require an increase in property taxes by 28.6 percent. The tentative increase will result in a millage rate of 9.983 mills, an increase of 1.99 mills. Without this tentative tax increase, the millage rate will be no more than 7.993 mills. The proposed tax increase for a home with a fair market value of \$100,000 is approximately \$79.60 and the proposed tax increase for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$300,000 is approximately \$238.80.

This is the first of three required public hearings.

Mayor Trapnell explained that the city and staff have really strived to get by without a tax increase. In 2008 there were decreases in home values. The state implemented a lot of exemptions which reduced the city's income little by little but salaries, insurance, and other expenses were steadily going up. We have finally reached the point that we need to increase our revenue. The proposed increase is not a lot but it is an increase.

Councilman Boyd stated that 1 mill equals around \$77,000. A 2 mill increase will generate around \$160,000. This will keep the city from having to dip into the fund balance.

Councilwoman Colson stated that just the city's insurance has gone up \$75,000. Councilman Boyd said that the fire loss on the gym was one of the reasons the insurance premiums went up.

Mr. Alton Slater reminded mayor and council that the general public has also had those same kinds of increases. He said that as a member of a group of citizens on fixed income, this has not gone up. We as citizens can't keep dipping into something that is not there. Probably at least 50 percent of citizens are on fixed incomes. There is no place

for us to get any more money without dropping our medications or insurance. Mr. Slater encouraged the mayor and council to think about this.

Mayor Trapnell said that the city leaders are conscious that there are a lot of people on fixed income. He said that we have tried to be very cautious but at the same time police, fire, streets and lanes, etc. are in need of equipment and manpower to be able to respond to the needs of the community.

Mr. Slater said that the streets are in great need of repair. Mayor Trapnell explained that there is a resurfacing list for our streets. Mr. Slater said that we need to look at using SPLOST funds to for paving roads.

Mayor Trapnell stated that the state takes away some of the city's revenue. Ms. Cody said that there has been a 6.8 million dollar drop in revenues from 2010 to 2017. Mayor Trapnell said that 2008 had repercussions. We didn't feel the hit until a little later. Also, we had Wallace Computer Services drop off our digest.

Mayor Trapnell said that several of our streets have been resurfaced. We have been using LMIG funds for these projects but the funds from LMIG keep dropping. It would take 50 years to resurface all streets that need it. TSPLOST has been a great help to us. Councilman Boyd asked how much it costs to pave a mile. Ms. Cody said \$60,000.

Councilman Boyd said that he is sensitive to what Mr. Slater is stating. Councilman Boyd said that the city implemented a recycling program on volunteer basis so we didn't make it a burden on anyone. Councilman Boyd said that the city changed its fiscal year to match the county's so for a few years we did not have a clear picture of our status but now we do. We have several things to add to our digest. The vehicle advalorum has hit us hard because the state took that away. There are no sales taxes on vehicles now. We have just now begun to miss that money. So that now has to be transferred from vehicles to home owners. The State of Georgia has done this to us. It was took from local governments and funneled to the state. The Georgia Municipal Association vigorously opposed that legislation. There is a huge penalty to people moving into Georgia from other states because of this. This has crippled city and county governments.

Mr. Slater said that there are lots of cities making money from recycling. It can be a profitable industry if handled right. Mayor Trapnell said that environmentally we should do it but we need a market for it or it goes into the landfill.

Councilman MacGregor said he understands what Mr. Slater is saying because he has family on fixed incomes. He said that there is nothing left to cut in the budget if we plan to provide the regular services. He said that he appreciates Ms. Cody going over the budget and showing the needs. He said that he doesn't take this lightly. He said that if there were any other way than raising taxes then he would be opposed. He said that it is what it is if we want to continue being a city.

Mayor Trapnell said that he can't say enough good things about our fire department but look at what they have to work in. Councilwoman Colson said that eventually SPLOST will help some.

Councilman Boyd said that we are behind on fire and police equipment. Now they have to have all kinds of equipment. Things cost a lot more and they are a lot more complex. Just gear for one fireman is unbelievable. One oxygen tank is \$6,000. We can't keep using this old stuff. Cost on everything has gone up. In the last 10 to 15 years property taxes and expenses have remained the same. Councilman Boyd said that he can't see where the city is wasting any sales tax money. It costs lots of money to repair water and sewer lines. We are trying to replace the old lines. Mayor Trapnell said that some of the lines have been in the ground since 1928.

Councilman Boyd said that the city can use SPLOST money for the new fire station. He said that staff along with mayor and council has been thru every penny of the budget and there is nothing to eliminate without cutting service.

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Councilwoman Colson said that the Fire Department has managed to drop the ISO rating which is saving citizens' money. These are savings from the city which are stems coming up causing flowers in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further comments, Mayor Trapnell thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the hearing at 10:35 a.m.

Angie Conner, City Clerk

William M. Trapnell, Mayor