

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MILLAGE PUBLIC HEARING
October 15, 2024 - 5:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairman Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Clay Griner

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING - Millage Rate

Stephanie Black, Finance Director, presented a millage presentation to the commissioners. Ms. Black stated this is the third public hearing for the millage, as the public hearing scheduled for September 26, 2024 was rescheduled due to Hurricane Helene. Chairman Slaughter stated that an increase was advertised, but after discussion with the commissioners, there is no intent to increase taxes at this time. Chairman Slaughter opened the floor for those wishing to speak in opposition to this request for the advertised increase. Mr. Freddie Bajalia, 1810 North Ashley Street, asked a question regarding the pending tax appeals. Chairman Slaughter responded that was a concern taken into consideration. Laura Spell, 5360 Golf Drive, spoke in opposition to the increase. Mrs. Spell asked what are the senior citizens supposed to do with these increases? Mrs. Spell asked the commission to take this into consideration. William Spell, 5360 Golf Drive, spoke in opposition to the increase. Mr. Spell mentioned the property tax increased by twenty percent from 2023 to 2024 and he asked what is the increase for and how is it being used? Commissioner Griner asked Finance Director, Stephanie Black what the county tax was prior to the Governor's reduction in 2023. Ms. Black presented a previous year's presentation showing that the increase over the last couple of years was about five percent. Kelly Wilson, 5392 Moss Oak Trail, spoke in opposition to the increase. Mrs. Wilson stated she is a school teacher and her husband is a school bus driver. Mrs. Wilson mentioned her property was valued \$40,000 more along with the percent increase. Mrs. Wilson asked if the county was making decisions on ways to cut back instead of increasing taxes. Elaine Darity, 4731 McAllister Street, spoke in opposition to the increase. Ms. Darity stated her house is worth \$100,000.00 and is being assessed for much more. Ms. Darity stated in four years there has been an increase of \$42,000.00 on her property. The neighborhood has deteriorated due to the residents not being made to maintain their homes, yards, fencing, and burning on undesignated days. No one spoke in favor of the increase. Vice Chairman Marshall stated these are unprecedented times and the commissioners have taken this into consideration. Commissioner Griner stated the county has held taxes and that the county and the county employees face the same circumstances as everyone