



FLOYD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
August 12, 2025

County Administration Building

Special Called Meeting - Suite 206

8:00 am

Present: Allison Watters, Rhonda Wallace, Mike Burnes, David Thornton, and Scotty Hancock; County Manager Jamie McCord, County Clerk Lauren Chumbler, and Assistant County Clerk John Bailey.

I) CALL TO ORDER

Chair Watters called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and led the invocation and the pledge of allegiance.

Mr. McCord presented a brief presentation on the millage rate process.

II) PUBLIC HEARING

II.1) FY25 Millage Rate for County M&O.

Chair Watters explained the rules for the public hearing. Chair Watters opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone to speak in support of the proposed millage rate. Seeing no one to speak in support, Chair Watters stated the Commission would let those in opposition speak for a total of 20 minutes.

IN OPPOSITION

William Blackburn, 773 Donahoo Road SE, Rome; "Good morning, my name is William Blackburn, I live at 773 Donahoo Road in Silver Creek I've been there about 18 years. I'm a touch confused because we're talking M&O and I thought this was also the sales tax increase so my notes and comments were on that because that's what the Rome News-Tribune three times has said was going to be discussed today. So, if we're not, I yield my time."

Chair Watters: Ok, sales tax will be discussed this evening at our regular meeting. So come back at 6 p.m.

Mr. Blackburn: Please have a discussion with the Rome News-Tribune.

Chair Watters: Are they here? I don't even see them. I'm sorry about that."

Barbara Penson, Rome; "So you say you have 13 people to speak right?"

Chair Watters: "Well now we have 12."

Penson: "Well Ron, I think, just went to the restroom."

Chair Watters: "No we're still counting Ron, we're giving back the time Mr. Blackburn had because he's..."

Penson: "I'm going to shorten mine and I'm just going to ask some questions. I don't understand. Y'all know I'm internal. I came out December the 31st. I don't understand how we keep on loading up the admin in this county with additional personnel. I don't get it. Where and what are all these administrative positions? What are they doing? I don't get it. When I came in in 2009 in Clerk of Superior Court there was a county manger and county clerk. That's who worked in these offices here. Now we're loaded to the brim. I don't get it. That's a lot of salary. Uh, the county clerk, uh, Carolyn Dillard who works in the clerks office used to be her um sidekick or her assistant. I've heard all about how it went and how it came and everything. I was here when Kevin Poe was still the county manager. There's been a lot of positions added and I don't understand it. We've got all this modern technology and everything that's supposed to be helping. Why do we keep buying software programs to help with everything but yet we keep hiring tons of people. I don't understand it. What are these people doing? I don't understand and never will understand why Kathy Arp was let go, why Nancy Lam was let go. I don't get it. Never heard a reason. I don't understand what John Blalock is doing. He was suddenly moved from EMS to some position that I could never find a title for over here. I don't get it. Like a hundred thousand dollar a year salary. What is going on? Why so many people? I don't get it. Now I'm not the brightest chicken in the house but I do understand numbers, I do understand taxes. I pay them too. I do. Plenty of them. My daughter's appraisal went from \$219,000 to \$506,000 this year. She don't live on Stonebridge, she lives on Lindsey Road the only thing beside her are mobile homes. That's ridiculous. We are appealing it with attorney. So some things have got to change. Yall need to understand we are watching, we do know what's going on. Thank you."

Ron Swinford, 11 Poplar Street, Rome; "My name is Ron Swinford, I live at..."

Chair Watters: "Hold on one second Ron."

Swinford: Ok, are you ready? OK. My name is Ron Swinford, I live at 11 Poplar Street, Rome, Georgia. And I'll be honest I don't really want to be here today. I work with y'all quite a bit, I come to all the meetings. I see all what y'all go through with the budget stuff. And I may not agree with all of it because I'm not up there. But I respect what y'all are doing and the reason I'm here today is not y'all. And it's not that you're going up a little bit on the millage rate. There's an old, I was hoping Chris would be here today, there's an old saying that goes around this time of the year that's normally brought up by county commissioners and city commissioners that taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. That quote is from Oliver Wendell Holmes and he was a Supreme Court justice. But when he wrote it, in 1907, he was a circuit court judge and he was dealing with a property tax case believe it or not. And what he should say if you read the entire decision, which I did, and that's the reason I'm not a lawyer, what he should say if done fairly taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. Now I've seen Jamie's presentation, it was good. I was going to mention Allison put out something that was incredible on Facebook. I wish it

was on the county's Facebook page, it was easy to understand. It went point by point and it did a very good job. She made a great point and it said you can't compare house to house because you don't know what exemptions one house may have and what another one may have. I agree with that about 99 1/2 percent. That's exactly what Fair Market Value is doing, is comparing a house that sold at the end of my street to all the other houses on my street. Now when I saw some of the assessments coming out and heard them I put out a thing on Facebook and speak to folks who have had big jumps over the last few years. And I went back to 2022, that's where I went back to. I spoke to 238 people on the phone about this. Here are my three favorites. By the way all three of these people had homestead exemptions and then they didn't and they've not been able to get an answer as to why. That's something y'all might want to look into. One lady her husband died. The house was in his name, they went through the formal thing get it put into her name. That might be the reason why. But the other two, not at all. A lady out in Coosa had a carport blow down uh April 1, 2022 the same day I lost my rental house in Celanese in that storm. The carport she said would have been built in the 80s was a piece of junk, her words not mine. And they replaced it, they put up a metal carport. That's what's been done with the house. 2022 her assessment was 152, they live on an acre and a half. There's not a house within a mile of them in any direction. They don't have sewer. Their current assessment this year \$382,000. That's kind of a lot. They can't sell it for that amount of money. They're trying right now. They've lived there 31 years. Gentleman down there in Silver Creek, same day, he had a tree hit a house. Didn't do anywhere near the damage mine did. Just took some shingles off. His insurance helped him pay for half of a new roof. He paid for the other half. Same day. \$222,171 was what his house was valued at. The same year a house down the street from him, all these houses are about the same they're all 3-2's they're all built within a year of each other, sold for 181. So he was like, well that's pretty good. This year it's 311, his assessment. The same house that sold for 181 in 22 sold for 184 last week. He's been assessed at 331. I hope that gets changed, that's what we're told the change in the assessments. But my personal favorite, a lady who lives out in East Rome lost her husband to COVID in 2020. They had a Homestead Exemption since it started. 2022 her Homestead Exemption is gone. No explanation, she calls down there she tries to find out, nobody would talk to her. When she finally got a call back from someone, it was if you don't like it appeal it. They hung up on her. Now I know those folks down there catch some awful phone calls. I'm not saying I blame them 100 percent. But 202 was what hers appraised for in 2022. It's at 476 right now. Now she does live in a nice neighborhood. It's a one-story house. It's one of the first ones built out there. A house down the street from her sold two months ago I think for 330, it's a two story twice the size of her house. The numbers aren't based in reality. It's like somebody at Disney made them up. And I hate to say that and I didn't come up here to complain about my taxes. Nobody wants to hear about the guy who owns eight houses complain about his taxes. I'm going to pay my fair share and I'm going to pay seven other people's fair share and I'm OK with that. I'm not arguing with that. But I am going to mention one of mine. I have a one-bedroom house in Celanese. 636 square feet. This is where I can compare house to house, one spot, because I have in the same neighborhood. One bedroom house appraised this year at \$102,157. I had a professional come out and look at them. I'm having all of mine reappraised this year. I can't use that in this year's taxes by the way. I can use it next year by

the way the taxes are read. That property value that he gave me, he said that house is worth between 65 and 68 thousand dollars. He went inside, he looked at it. It's an original house it has no carport, no driveway none of it. It's a bigger lot that some of the Celanese houses, that's the reason it's a little more. I have another house a little less than a block away. Two bedrooms, been built onto in the front, been built onto in the back, a paved driveway and a two car brick garage. Same neighborhood, the houses are two years apart when they were built. \$90,000 was the assessment on it. I'm not appealing that one, why would I? But we're comparing apples and rutabagas it seems like. And the reason people are mad, you know this, no one wants to pay taxes. That's fine. It's part of life. But when the numbers don't make sense and you can't sell a house for what you say we can, that makes a lot of people really unhappy. One thing I'd like to mention to you if we need the extra income we might start looking at this. It's been mentioned in this room more than once. Impact fees on developers. I've found 1,250 houses that are officially coming to Floyd County and that's the official numbers, I know that It's more than that. Wouldn't it be nice to have a little more money from the developers for that bridge you all have been messing with out in East Rome. I mean, you've been having to work on it, wouldn't it be nice for the eight houses that have been put in behind Celanese that we have pump trucks out there every week because you hooked brand new houses to a sewer system that is 98 years old and it can't handle it because the grade on it is like that. You're going to have to pump you know what uphill in one spot. We know that won't work. These are some things for y'all to think about. Like I said, I'm not coming here yell at y'all and scream at y'all about assessments because that's not what y'all do but the folks that do do it won't talk to us, so y'all are next. Thank you very much for my time."

Vice Chair Wallace: "Ron, before you leave today would you share that list of those people that you were just talking about to us. You don't have to do it right now, but if you would get that to Jamie McCord, or Lauren or John so that way we could investigate who those people are..."

Swinford: "I would be more than happy to except for the fact that every one of them asked me not to."

Vice Chair Wallace: Oh, OK.

Swinford: Because, and I quote, I asked every one of them if I could and they said no, because I don't want the tax office coming after us.

Vice Chair Wallace: It's hard to help people if we don't know who they are. Thank you Ron.

Chair Watters: Thank you Mr. Swinford.

Jon Willerson, 180 Beard Lake Road, Rome; "Good morning everyone. Jon Willerson, 180 Beard Lake Road, mines about the assessments too. They just don't make any sense to me. You stated that in 2016 that was the last time the state assessed the values. 2017 is when everything started going up."

Manager McCord: That was the last time they actually had a millage rate.

Willerson: That wasn't the question though. So on those assessments can anybody explain to me why Kevin Payne's house is valued at \$84 a square foot and mine's valued at \$140 a square foot? That's really the only question I have."

Steve Mitchell, 242 Ravenwood Road, Rome: "Good morning, Steve Mitchell. A lot of my issues that I have has been brought up already. My biggest thing is I've been paying taxes in this county since I was 18 years old. And they

go up, they go down a little. Very rarely ever they go down in any form or fashion. But they go up. I guess wasteful spending is one of the things I have a problem with. The little park they built here just recently over there off Cave Spring Road and South Broad. I go through there every day, I've seen maybe 5 people out there in six months. We're spending money to keep it up, we're spending money to build it. For what reason? Who decides to do that and why? I mean did they not look at the area. You've got a boys and girls club right across the road. I think the biggest thing there is I feel there's a lot of waste that goes on and things are built that the people do have an option that I know of. There may be an option to vote against it or for it. I know on my, I kind of like Jon was saying a while ago, I don't understand how somebody's property in the same neighborhood can be worth this amount and this one this amount. Because there's very large differences in values. One may be newer I understand that one may be a little older but it doesn't seem to decrease with the age of your house. They still go up. Thank you for your time.

Vice Chair Wallace: Mr. Mitchell if I could ask you a question, you said you go by where?

Chair Watters: "What park where you talking about?"

Vice Chair Wallace: "I'm sorry I couldn't hear you."

Mitchell: "It's right there coming off South Broad where Cave Spring Road divides right there."

Vice Chair Wallace: "That is a city park, we'll make a note of that though."

Chair Watters: "It's a city park. Thank you."

Billy Carver, 67 Rush Chapel Road, Rome: "Good morning. I'm Billy Carver, I live at 67 Rush Chapel Road, I'm probably going to strike a slightly different tone than most people in here. I want to encourage you guys a little bit, and I want to tell you that I honor you. I don't envy you. I do respect you and you do a hard thing. I try to live my life by scripture and Romans 13:7 says very simply pay obligations to everyone, taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe you respect and honor to those you owe honor. You guys do a hard job and I respect you and honor you for it. But as a pastor I also speak on behalf of some people. There's a lady in my church who recently had to sell her house as a widow simply because of inflation and cost and a large part of it was property tax and insurance. Now I understand that you guys have metrics you work in. Mr. McCord has made that plainly known. The state has set forth things. I get it. I'm not ignorant. I understand. I also understand that our county schools are running us off the rails. I have spoken to my state representatives, I have spoken to the board of education, spoken to Tony Daniel, Jay Shell, Steve Turrentine is on my list. I'm going one by one and I want you guys to know that I'm speaking...I'm not putting blame on you guys. I'm putting blame on the whole system is messed up. Somebody somewhere has to say no. Somebody somewhere has to do something. I'm not here to be angry, I'm not here to yell. But I am asking you guys to do something. Form a commission. Send something to the state as representatives of Floyd County to say this doesn't work. Speak out, speak up, stand up. Do something. Just a yes vote, continually yes, yes, yes. It would be tough. I have family that works for the county. Shut the government for a minute. Make the state see. Do something. Cause doing nothing and just accepting it and going with it doesn't work. I know some of you are trying hard. I know all of you are. But I thought about this this morning. Everybody in this

room probably knows this quote. Ronald Reagan once said the nine scariest words in the English language are what: I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Your constituents aren't just angry - they're scared. They're scared of losing their homes. They're scared of losing their community. They're scared of losing everything they've ever worked for. Why? Because they can't afford it. It's people's livelihood at stake. So I'm begging you. I'm pleading with respect and honor. Defend your constituents. Do all you can do within your power. Call on your constituents. Some of us want to help. I'd be happy to help. I'd give my time willingly. Whatever we can do, please let us know. Thank you."

Sylvia Burton, 247 Boulder Road, Rome: "Hello, my name is Sylvia Burton, and I live at 247 Boulder Road, and I'd like to mirror a lot of what has been said today. I think we're at a precipice here in Floyd County. The common man is not going to be able to afford his home. These people are going to move out. They're going to be renters. What is going to happen to the American dream of owning your own little piece of property and being able to live in your home the rest of your life even when you're retired. You know, to be able to afford that property. What is going to happen to these people? What is our responsibility as Floyd County and as government and as citizens to make sure our residents as equally as well as other interests like government, builders, new developments. How can we balance this so that our residents who have lived there all our life can continue to have a quality of life. Thank you."

Randall Greer, 4718 Old Dalton Road, Rome: "My sentiments have been completely expressed by the ladies and gentlemen that have already stood up, much more eloquently than I could do so I won't repeat that. If I understood you correctly, and I know you said you're not here to answer questions this morning, but the assessed value of our property is set by the state."

Mr. McCord: "Fair market value is a process set by the state handled by a separate board other than this board, the Board of Assessors. They value your property as of January 1 of each year and it's a math problem from that point forward."

Greer: "You know I'm 74 years old; I'm retired, we live in a house we built two years ago - my wife and I - a two bedroom house. And the assessed value of that property went up \$67,000 this year. My mother's property which I control and manage rural property went up \$100,000 this year. I'm currently paying \$300 a month for property taxes and, like I said I won't repeat what everyone else has already said that I'm in complete agreement with. I just don't see the ROI on that to most of us. I don't see where the end of this is going. So that's why I'm here this morning to understand that the meeting this afternoon you'll consider all these and (INAUDIBLE). Well thank you for your time and thank you."

Chair Watters: "Thank you."

Tommy Dunagan, 2836 Everett Springs Road, Rome: Y'all all got me too nervous to speak this morning. Chair Watters: Ah, don't be nervous.

Dunagan: "Hello, Mr. McCord. I'm a retired logger and I've acquired a few pieces of property and this past year by properties have went up approximately \$400,000 from what they was last year. Um, I'm not positive on the four but it's close to it. I've been trying to think what could y'all do, the county do, the state do to try and get this under control because it's gotten near the point

where it takes all your social security money just to pay your taxes. And um, I don't know what the age limit you got to be to get out of school taxes no more, do y'all? 75? But make a long story short what do y'all think we can do besides the millage rate. Do we start running the cars and trucks and stuff five or six more years, would that affect the price of the taxes at the end of the game. Have more shops working on stuff, fixing them and sending them back out of the road like we had to do when I first starting logging. I had a 70s something model pulpwood truck and I run it for 20 years. That's just what I see, I see all this new modern equipment running up and down the road but you've got five people there with it. Most of the time four or five, three of them sitting on it. So you know I just wished we could come up with some kind of plan where it would be a little more reasonable and I'm thinking. If I had one of y'all's jobs I'd work hard with y'all, but I ain't going to run. I admire all of you. I know all of you are heavy drinkers except him, you'd all have to be. Anyway, maybe we can all work together and come up with a plan and get this thing under control. It ain't just Floyd County, I looked this morning on TV and not far from here and they had a 21 percent increase, it's Douglasville. It ain't just a problem here. It's really come to a head in the whole state. I appreciate y'all's time."

After the initial 20 minutes expired, Chair Watters asked the Commission if they would like to extend the time to allow for the remaining four individuals that signed up to speak. Commissioner Hancock made a motion to add 12 more minutes to the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Thornton. The motion carried 5-0.

Tonya Shepard, Old Dalton Road, Rome: "Hello, I'm Tonya Shepard and I live on Old Dalton Road. I'm kind of busy working all the time so I don't have something prepared. But I can say that you keep saying the millage rate goes down, the assessment goes up or the assessments go down and the millage rate goes up. No matter what, our taxes, we're paying more and more every year. Mine went up \$2,000 a year for the last five years. I was planning on retiring this year well I can't retire. I'm back on the work force and working when I was just doing paperwork and bidding jobs and getting people to do them and now I'm having to work when I was just doing paperwork and bidding jobs and getting people to do them. But now I'm having to work and do extra jobs to pay these taxes. If my mom had to pay her taxes she would have already lost her house. She's not making enough money to pay her bills and her taxes, so I'm paying her taxes also. The bottom line is the budget is totally out of control and I know there's plenty of people that can look at this budget and handle this budget and reduce this budget so that everybody's taxes can go down. Whether the assessments go up or the millage rate go up the taxes have got to come down. There's got to be an alternative way to control this budget. I've had in the last six months, um, I used to take my crew out once a month, have dinner um lunch I can't do that anymore. I can't buy any new tools because I'm paying taxes. Everybody's got to cut back because Georgia Power's going up, Comcast going up, water went up. We've got to have a break somewhere. We're paying for something we've already paid for and it's getting a little frustrating. And I'm real upset about Floyd County citizens. We should be able to hold this meeting in the forum because there should be so many people up here angry about how high the taxes are. We should be having a waiting line outside the forum. I just do not understand these citizens of Floyd County not coming up here and

voicing their opinions on what they're paying in these taxes. And I know y'all have a hard job and I do appreciate you and I did run for your office. Thank goodness I didn't get it. I mean God was watching out for me. I'm working so hard right now, I couldn't handle it. Please just y'all have the position now you can talk to others and look at this budget and please try to help us out. Thank you."

Karen Mabry, 14 Central Avenue, Rome: "I thought I was just signing in, so now I'm going to speak. My sentiments are the same as everyone else's. The pastor he had some great things to say and I guess I want to continue in that vein and just appealing to you as a person um an elderly person now and I hope I don't get very emotional but. I guess my main thing is not being angry at the amount of property tax I have to pay. It's more disappointment. I live in Lindale at 14 North Central Avenue. Lindale proper, it's not a very big home but I'm paying almost \$300 a month in property taxes. I have to put that back. I'm retired, semi-retired, I'm an educator. My husband is retired, not really planned to, uh he was diagnosed with Parkinsons. So we're living on a shoestring budget and um we're having a lot of extra bills we didn't plan for. Wasn't what we planned for our retirement. But all of you will face stuff like this one day because you're going to get old. You're going to have to retire. You're going to have to try and keep your home and stay in your home. But it's almost unsustainable to be able to stay in a home when you're paying \$300 a month here and then because out property assessments have gone up our insurance is going to go up. So there is more insurance to pay as well to stay in our home. It's all almost like a little snowball that just rolls and rolls and rolls and gets bigger and bigger and bigger. So we hoped to retire well but its not going to be well because we're faced with unsustainable taxes and unsustainable things in our county. I guess what I'm asking you to um look at the budget. Where can you cut. I mean I've had to do my budget in my home. I helped to start Unity Christian School here in Rome, um, we operated on a shoestring budget and yeah we charged tuition but our tuition rate when we started was less than the tax allotment for each public school child. And we tried to keep those things down but we had to look where we could cut and what we could do well. And that's what I do in my home. Sometimes I say no, over the years I said no to my children because they wanted things. They wanted nice things, they wanted things to look nice, whatever. But they um but sometimes I had to say no. So I guess what I'm asking you to do is to look at the budget maybe say no to some things. Maybe um let's look at these assessments. I'm certain my house would never sell for what it assessed for but um anyway that's all I have to say today for someone who didn't sign up to speak."

Don Sierzant, 117 Lookout Circle, Rome: "Good morning, I'm Don Sierzant. I live in 117 Lookout Circle. I used to eat ribeye steak, I used to eat salmon but I had to cut back. The government has to cut back, but these people cut back instead. My mom is 94 years old. We built a house when I was 13 years old. Didn't have no mortgage on it. Her taxes right now, she's 94 she makes \$996 on social security. Her taxes are \$16,000 a year, she's 94 years old, oh yeah she doesn't live here, but this is what this is coming to. You're going to push people out. Yeah, \$16,000 that's insane for a 94 year old woman. So anyway so, her family puts in money to uh help her live where she lives."

Commissioner Hancock: "She doesn't live here though right?"

Sierzant: "You know what I can't hear anything here because I have hearing aids and it echoes."

Commissioner Hancock: "Yeah, it's terrible. She didn't live here though right, a \$16,000 tax bill you said she didn't live here though right?"

Sierzant: "Yeah"

Commissioner Hancock: "No no I get it, I was thinking Lord."

Sierzant: "Let's talk about some waste. When I saw the numbers up there, school gets a bunch of money that's tax money right. The first year Anna K. Davie was open and taught kids their grade was a D. Brand new school a D they got. The second year they got an F. I asked why how come they didn't get an E. They said they skipped the E and went to F. The next year an F. The next year an F. The next year an F and I stopped looking. And we're paying tax money to not teach kids. You know what you got out of school? Books. There's no books in school. You can't flip a page back and look this is the education system we're paying a lot of money for. Another waste, there's a 20 mph speed limit on the street out there right? So you guys had to go pay somebody to increase the speed limit to 25 and put signs up there. Then you put speed bumps in there to lower the speed because people were going too fast. Waste of money, you guys waste money you don't even think about what you're doing sometimes you know?"

Chair Watters: "Mr. Sierzant"

Sierzant: We're all skimping on what we're buying how come you guys, did you guys get rid of anybody in the government."

Chair Watters: "We have, but Mr. Sierzant your time is up and we're not going to extend the time again. Your time is up, yes we've run out of time on the public hearing even though we extended it we...that's what I'm saying. We're..."

Sierzant: Give me some more time (unintelligible)

Chair Watters: No we're not going to extend the public hearing again, we did extend it by 12 minutes so we're not going to extend it again.

Sierzant: (unintelligible)

Chair Watters: "We are happy to wait until after the public hearing and meet with you individually. So let's go back over some of the issues that were brought to our attention to this public hearing. Jamie, Ms. Penson mentioned some people that I did not know her names, changes in the administrative team if you want to just give a brief history of what we're doing in our administrative positions."

The Commission and Mr. McCord addressed questions and issues raised during the public hearing.

III) OTHER BUSINESS

IV) ADJOURN

With no other business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 am.