

July 12, 2007
Special Session
Bonifay, Florida

The Holmes County Board of Commissioner met in a Workshop on the above date with the following members present: Commissioner Kenneth Williams, Commissioner Monty Merchant, Commissioner Jim King, Commissioner Phillip Music, Commissioner Raymon Thomas, Chairman of the Board.

Mr. Greg Wood, County Administrator, was present.

Angie Jonas, Deputy Clerk, was present and kept the minutes.

Chairman Thomas opened the meeting and led the prayer and pledge.

Pursuant to Public Notice, the Board held a workshop to discuss establishing a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU) for fire services funding. Input was received from the volunteer fire departments. Discussion included the following:

Obtaining citizens' support by educating them regarding this issue

Door to door campaign by fire departments for their respective districts

Unity of all fire departments regardless of different funding amounts

Forming a committee of fire department members to bring a workable plan to the Board

Assessment amounts of \$25 per household and \$108 for businesses

Establishing a cap on the assessment amount

Utilizing churches as a part of the citizens' education process

Chairman Thomas advised that the establishment of a MSBU would not be impacted by the new property tax rules and would not affect revenue received through ad valorem taxes since it was an "assessment" and not a tax. He also advised that the Board had the authority to adopt this without the referendum of the voters. He stated that it could not be enacted in time for the 2008 tax roll and it must be addressed soon if it would take effect for the following year. He also stated that if the ad valorem tax cut referendum passes, funding available for fire departments will be greatly reduced, but could be funded through MSBU.

The following citizens spoke regarding this issue:

Shay McCormick-Bonifay Fire Chief

J.R. Brooks-PDL Fire Chief

Roger Deal-New Hope Fire Chief

Charles Corcoran-Esto Fire Chief

Mr. Bryan Bell spoke as a representative of the Poplar Springs School area. He advised that it may be hard to gain support from his area due to the present response time of Esto Fire Department to this area. He asked for help getting an agreement between the County and Graceville Fire Department so that citizens in his area could have a faster response time. Greg Wood, Administrator, advised that he was meeting with the Graceville City Manager and Fire Chief to discuss this issue.

The Board agreed for the Fire Association to form a committee of not more than seven members to work on a plan for establishing a MSBU and to bring those names to their next regular meeting. Chairman Thomas stated that he and Mr. Wood would also serve on this committee.

Commissioner King made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Music seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Clerk

Chairman