

2010 CEO Budget Meeting
Chapel Hill Middle School
January 19, 2010

The meeting was opened by the hosts, Eugene and Betty Dixon. They welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming out to this very important community meeting. They introduced CEO Burrell Ellis who proceeded with the meeting agenda.

CEO Ellis thanked the Dixon's for their work and leadership. He noted that the AJC had erroneous reports about the County being out of money. He highlighted the corrections and pointed out that the County is well managed and that a key priority for the 2010 budget is to maintain our sworn public safety officials, first responders and police officers.

CEO Ellis introduced Commissioner Connie Stokes, Chair of the Budget Committee and co-sponsor of the 12 budget gatherings. He also introduced other elected officials that were present.

CEO Ellis presented the proposed 2010 Budget using the slide presentation. The audience had handouts of the presentation.

Questions/Comments

1. *One of the slides referenced \$19.3 million. Is that a net number? How much is attributed to Dunwoody?*

Response from the CEO: The total impact of Dunwoody is \$5.9M; the property tax loss is \$4M; the actual dollars lost is not currently available. There are minor costs associated with services that were decreased, which reflects some savings to the County. Actual dollar impact to the County is between \$16M and \$19M.

Approximately 56% of County taxes come from residential properties. We are looking at options to stay competitive. We are working with legislators to remove the barriers to borrowing and bonds. The GM site is about 165 acres and the greatest opportunities for jobs. We need State and federal government help.

2. *Please consider the court system as part of the Criminal Justice system. People must be heard within 72 hours. Consider the courts as part of the Continuum. We need to keep public defenders.*

Response from the CEO: Thank you for your help. We need all members of the team. A safe community is the foundation for a strong county. We are all partners... from the DA's office to the courts.

The CEO, the Sheriff and the DA may have vacancies as a result of persons retiring. The CEO's budget did not restore positions in the courts and Public Defenders office. These were tough decisions to make. How much do we cut? How much do we raise taxes? We will continue the theme of the Continuum of Courts. The question is: where will the cuts come from?

One resident commented that he was not happy taxes are going up but the alternatives are worse.

3. *What is the budget impact on libraries?*

Response from the CEO: The proposed budget keeps all libraries open. The early retirement program may have an impact if cuts have to be made. Library materials are impacted: Two years ago the library had \$2M for materials – now it has \$100,000 in materials. Libraries are good resources for people looking for jobs.

Commissioner Connie Stokes talked about libraries reusing books.

4. *Please refer to Slide #22 concerning the Grady contribution. Have other counties been asked to support Grady?*

Response from the CEO: Yes – we have asked the State to mandate it. With the economy being bad we need to do more than ask. We need everyone to please talk to their elected officials and stake holders.

We need political courage! We need to raise our voices! Grady is a regional hospital.

5. *The CEO was complimented on doing a great job on his participation on the MLK celebration.*

What are we going to do to check run-a-way growth? Impact on schools? Roads? Have we studied different fees for DeKalb residents vs. non-residents for services such as parks, garbage?

Response from the CEO: The County has been exploring different avenues to increase revenues. In terms of checking run-away growth, the County is currently in process of updating zoning ordinances. For more information, you can contact our Planning Department. In terms of fees for non-residents, we have explored some issues and will continue to do so. We must make sure we clearly analyze the additional expenses associated with administering a program where ID is required because it could be staff intensive depending on how it is structured.

6. *Where can taxpayers obtain information on appropriations to the school board?*

How will CEO be involved in President Obama's new program?

The resident expressed concerns about the amount of money going to the schools and how they are using the funds. He wants the CEO to sit down with the school board.

Response from the CEO: The CEO emphasized that the Board of Education and the local county government are two totally separate entities and the County does not get involved with the budgeting, financing or issues relating to the school system. Accountability is first and foremost for the County. Even though we are separate, we cooperate with each other on issues such as hosting budget meetings and the Heart of DeKalb program. Information may be shared but everyone must stay within their realm of responsibility.

7. *The representative from Yorkshire Community had three different concerns/questions. 1. How can we leverage resources and utilize shared services? The Community Achievement Center on Flat Shoals Parkway is a great example of the County working with the community to make sure that services are provided with minimal cost to the County. 2. How can Public Works fix potholes/roads that need to be repaired in the Wesley Chapel area? 3. MARTA.*

Response from the CEO: We need community partnerships. We would definitely like to explore other partnerships. We want you to complete a comment card so that we can get more information about leveraging and shared services.