

**2010 CEO Budget Meeting  
Druid Hills High School  
January 14, 2010**

Bruce MacGregor of the Druid Hills Civic Association opened the session by welcoming participants and introducing CEO Ellis. CEO Ellis then acknowledged the elected officials present: Commissioners Kathy Gannon and Jeff Rader, Chief Records Court Judge Nelly Withers, Judge Johnny Panos, Judge Mark Scott and former Commissioner Judy Yates. Later to enter the session with acknowledgements were Commissioners Connie Stokes and Sharron Barnes Sutton. The CEO then made opening remarks regarding the difficult budget process in the current economic climate. He stated that he believes that the budget his administration has prepared will put DeKalb County in a strong position once the economy rebounds. Commissioner Rader then made remarks regarding the importance of community involvement in the budget process and told the participants that he will be hosting a budget meeting in his district on February 2 at the Toco Hills Library. Commissioner Stokes then made comments regarding the timeline of the budget process and stated that the Commissioners are open to receiving suggestions from residents about how to further reduce the budget. Commissioner Barnes Sutton then followed by thanking the public for coming to the meeting and participating in their local government.

CEO: Slide presentation of DeKalb County 2010 Budget

**Questions/Comments:**

*1. In light of the high number of foreclosures in DeKalb County, is it fair to ask residents to pay higher property taxes when many homeowners have underwater mortgages and cannot afford additional taxes? Why is the CEO's Office receiving a budget increase in the proposed budget?*

**Response from the CEO:** The County has significantly reduced its budget this year and must increase the millage rate if it is to continue providing the same level of services to residents. Additional revenue sources have been explored which will minimize what citizens are being asked to pay. Residents are also urged to provide good ideas to bring the millage rate down. The CEO has requested an increase in his office's budget because the funds are necessary for him to continue in a hands-on role in County affairs.

*2. Cutting the DeKalb County Court System will have a detrimental impact on public safety in the County. A backlog of court cases will overload the jail, result in delayed trials and possibly end with criminals being released from the jail.*

**Response from the CEO:** Many people have questioned why certain cuts have been made in this budget. At the previous budget meeting Judge C.J. Becker noted that the cost to house an inmate is \$54 a day. Therefore there are additional costs that must be considered if trials are going to be delayed and prisoners are going to be jailed for longer time periods.

*3. The District Attorney's budget should not be cut, nor should the Public Defender's. Doing so would delay defendants the right to a speedy trial, which would especially impact victims of domestic violence. An increase in the millage rate is preferable to a decrease in County services.*

**Response from the CEO:** If residents do not want to see their services cut, they should provide ideas for funding county services.

*4. Has the County evaluated replacing their current fleet of garbage trucks with one-man, mechanical lifting-arm trucks to possibly gain greater efficiency?*

**Response from Sanitation:** The County has evaluated this in the past. Doing so would require either phasing the trucks in over time or replacing all of the fleet at once. In the past, neither option was feasible, but all options will be explored again when evaluating future rate increases. The CEO requested this name and phone number for follow-up: Mr. David Scott, 404.633.4997.

*5. Has the County evaluated the incentives offered by the Development Authority of DeKalb County? Introducing development impact fees may be a way to receive revenue from non-profit organizations that are in an expansion mode, since these organizations do not pay property taxes. The Development Department does a great job and should be kept intact in light of the number of abandoned subdivisions in the County.*

**Response from the CEO:** Development impact fees have been considered in the past, but he will look into their use. The Office of Economic Development recently completed an incentives best practices study. These incentives are important to get people working again. The County has several opportunities to create new jobs, including the GM facility and many underutilized shopping centers. It is important to offer competitive incentives because DeKalb County is competing not only with other counties in metro Atlanta, but also with neighboring states for new jobs and investment.

*6. Are funds set aside in the budget for possible upcoming legal settlements? How will the County evaluate possible proposals for outsourcing the Development Department, as has been proposed in the CEO's budget? What does the category called "other" in the budget encompass and why does it show an 85% increase?*

**Response from the CEO:** With regards to pending lawsuits, the County's liability is expected to be far less than that of other counties facing similar claims. The County will aggressively defend itself from all lawsuits.

**Response from Finance:** Funds have been allocated in the budget for litigation in a non-immunity account.

**Response from COO:** Due to a lawsuit filed by developers several years ago, the County is required to fund the Development Department using fees generated by development activity. As fees fell, this necessitated the reduction in force that occurred last year.

Because a baseline of activity must be maintained, the County is considering outsourcing these activities to realize potential cost savings and greater efficiencies. The County will engage in an RFQ process to determine if this plan is economically feasible.

**Response from Finance:** The “other” category in the budget shows an increase because of three main components: 1) the Registrar’s Office which will require additional funds because 2010 is an election year, 2) an accounting treatment based on the previous year’s salary savings from unfilled positions which have been abolished in the current budget, and 3) the 2009 budget included unexpended bond payments on the juvenile court facility which has now been completed.

The CEO concluded the meeting by thanking participants for engaging in the conversation and reminded everyone of the ten upcoming budget meetings.