

**2010 CEO Budget Meeting
East Lake YMCA
January 21, 2010**

The Meeting was hosted and opened by Brenda Pace of the East Lake Terrace Neighborhood Association. She acknowledged the other neighborhoods represented in the audience and welcomed all in attendance. Afterwards, she introduced CEO Burrell Ellis.

CEO's Comments – The CEO acknowledged the public officials in the audience including DeKalb County Commissioners Stokes and Johnson, several Judges and Representative Benefield. He began the meeting by telling the audience how good it was to be there with them face-to-face to talk about matters that mean the most to them, which is continued delivery of services to the citizens of DeKalb. He stated that his goal in balancing the budget is to make the citizens' priorities the priority for DeKalb County's Administration. "This process is only as good as you make it", he stated. He further stated that the County is experiencing the most challenging economic times. DeKalb County is not out of money, although revenue has fallen as a result of an economic crisis unlike the world has faced in years. He assured the audience that prior to the adoption of this budget the Administration will consider the feedback and ideas from the citizens. Adjustments will be made where needed; on February 21st the Board of Commissioners will adopt a budget that was thoroughly scrutinized in order to deliver county services in the best way possible. The end result is to make County government more user friendly for all.

Commissioner Stokes Comments – Commissioner Stokes stated how very important it was for citizens to be there so that as the Board of Commissioners sit down to discuss the budget, citizens' ideas will be considered. She acknowledged that some will not want to come to the microphone to speak but she encouraged all to do so. "Your good ideas are needed", she stated and further stated that some will have great ideas. The County will consider these ideas and if possible use them as best practices. She acknowledged that Public Safety is a priority for many and assured the audience that it is a priority to the Board of Commissioners as well. She announced the Budget Committee Meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00pm until 4:00pm and welcomed public attendance at these meetings.

CEO: Slide presentation of DeKalb County 2010 Budget

Questions/Comments:

1. The BOC need to look at Planning and Development Department cuts. The County needs to cut more because the Planning and Development department do not have enough to do. Our community had to spend \$4,000 dollars for public storm drains. These jobs are left incomplete and are unacceptable. The County needs to look at the quality of services it provides.

Response from the CEO: The CEO asked the Executive Assistant/COO to address the issues regarding the Planning and Development department. He acknowledged the citizen's concern with regards to customer service and related a similar experience he had with one of the departments. He stated that he called and gave the employee his name and stated what he

needed. The employee did not give him the proper assistance nor did the employee follow through with the call. He stated that he recognizes customer service training is a must. Employees should know the expectations of the customer; the customers' needs should be fully met without transferring them to someone else. Employees should also know their county officials.

2. The County's population has grown 3% but there is a 15% increase in the proposed budget. Why? The County is entirely dependant on property taxes; it needs more diversity; linking services to taxes. To address waste, fraud and abuse is a good thing. The County seems to be working in silos. The last time the CEO was here (East Lake Community) the neighborhood was dealing with speed bumps that took three months to address. It also took six weeks to resolve a problem with regards to the water being cut off.

Response from the CEO: The CEO asked Watershed Management to speak with the citizen in details regarding the water cut-off and acknowledged that the citizen brought up a lot of good points. The Administration has addressed the silo problem by restructuring into various groups to create functionality and cross-functional teams. This systematic approach to government has brought departments together. An example is the Development Group which includes Workforce Development, Economic Development, Community Development, Human Development and Planning and Development.

3. Rentals are not allowing property owners to invest in our neighborhoods. There is an increase in code violations. We need to look at what other cities are doing in this regard. Illinois changed their code enforcement laws to cut down on high crime and violations. There is an unnecessary duplication of services such as sidewalks, speed bumps and stop signs. Why are these related services housed in three different departments? DeKalb County requires 60% homeowners' signatures to get speed bumps. This should be less.

Response from the CEO: The County from time to time receives citizens concerns regarding codes; ultimately it comes down to what is best. Code violations are Public Safety concerns; Planning will look at the issue of codes and Public Works will address the speed bumps. The CEO asked that each of the Departments identify themselves and speak with the citizen before leaving. **He also requested to be reminded to evaluate the organizational structure of sidewalks, speed bumps and stop signs being housed in separate departments.**

4. What programs do you have to keep our youngsters from getting in to the court system? Will you help us secure a building to help get these youngsters on the right path?

Response from the CEO: Public Safety is a top priority and does not mean just arresting people but implementing programs such as Pal Plus, Heart of DeKalb and other programs. Workforce Development and Parks and Recreation invested dollars to boost the self-esteem and morale of youth within the Towers community. Empowering people to do more is the key to combating crime in our neighborhoods. The creation of the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment was set up for the exchange of dialogue between communities and government. The CEO referred the customer to the Office of Neighborhood Empowerment.

5. Is the Inspector General position creating a new job? Why not use volunteers in customer service positions? The County should pick up garbage only once a week. Recycling can be done

by individual citizens. Littering needs to be addressed and violators should be fined. A suggestion is to use cameras to catch violators. Citizens are not cutting their grass. The County needs to stop cutting the grass and blowing it all over yards. The County should take the responsibility of picking up the clippings. It would be nice to call and speak with a live person. I'm not a robot so I do not want to speak with a machine. I do not recommend the 1% raise in employees' salaries.

Response from the CEO: "I appreciate your comments". First, the Administration is proposing the elimination of seven hundred positions with four or five hundred to possibly take advantage of early retirement. The proposed Inspector General's office will be used to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse and therefore save the County money. It is because of the regular complaints such as those the citizen addressed, that the Inspector General position is needed. Government can do its part by treating each community as if it is our own. The CEO stated it is one thing to be irresponsible due to adjusting to a job loss; maybe the homeowner needs to borrow a lawn mower but to intentionally and neglectfully litter is another. Code Enforcement will look into this matter. The CEO agreed that more can be done. The 1% raise that is proposed for employees is based on the salary savings from the retirees and the comparative salaries of surrounding counties. This will be a morale booster because employees will be asked to do more with less.

6. The average cost of incarceration is \$60 a day, which is about twice what I earn as a substitute teacher. The waiting time is too long to post bail. Law students can be utilized to conduct research to expedite law proceeding and court dates? This will not impact the budget.

Response from the CEO: The CEO thanked the customer for her service and suggestion.

7. Is there a one page budget document? A cut in the planning department is one of the reasons Dunwoody left because of a lack of accountability. Citizens need assurance that our voices are heard. Maybe we need a drop box for community input/suggestions.

Response from Finance: The budget document is available at www.co.dekalb.ga.us. Development Department funds are special revenue funds, meaning it operates on the funds it takes in. Due to the decline in development industry the Development Department was impacted. However, the Planning Department operates from the General Fund and will be experiencing some cuts as well.

Response from Information Systems: We have an electronic suggestion box on-line.

Response from the CEO: The Office of Neighborhood Empowerment is your voice in regards to zoning processes and dispute resolutions.

8. Privatization of the Development Department should be a last option, we do not need to do this anywhere else. The citizen expressed a bad experience with a police officer.

Response from the CEO: The CEO asked the Public Safety Director and Community Development Director to speak with this gentleman. We have a lifelong commitment to seniors and youth.