

## Financial Management Committee

15 January 2026

Chair County Executive (CE) Graham Stowe opened the meeting asking Commissioner Matthew Hopkins to offer a prayer and lead the pledge. The Minutes of 22 October 2025 were moved for approval by Commissioner Erin Curry and seconded by Commissioner Matthew Hopkins and were approved with two changes made by School Director Dr. Vickie Beard relating to disposal of school buses based on mileage and yearly time driven. The CE gave an overview of the differences of responsibilities between the Financial Management (FM) Committee and the Budget Committee; i.e., the FM has overall responsibility for implementing policies, procedures and regulations in order to have efficient financial management. The Budget Committee in using the approved policies reviews the proposed expenditures, after rigorously assessing needs vs wants, to balance revenues with expenditures, as well as looking at the long-term effects. The CE said the Financial Management Committee is staffed with and Chaired by the CE, 3 Department Heads, 4 Commissioners including Budget Committee chair, and a non-voting member the FM Director Beth Moore-Sumners. FM Director Moore-Sumners then gave an overview, similar to one given recently to the Budget Committee of areas of concern as well as some specific over budgeted items i.e., schools having additional payrolls in June (due to where payroll falls within a monthly calendar), and schools' transfer of bond payment which is winding down and affects interest income (on unused borrowed funds). She mentioned the disposal of asset report showing from 1 Jul – December and being \$22,624. Re grants she said her office now has a listing of all grants (\$4.7M just county with school grants being separate). Further there is now a data base that tracks all the process, noting her office is responsible for all grants regardless of which county office might pursue. She noted that the state auditors are pleased with the tracking data base. She mentioned the timekeeping software used in all departments and is going live shortly.

School contract – Director of Schools Dr. Vickie Beard discussed a proposed resolution to authorize participation in the US Educational Technology Purchasing Alliance (USETAPA) (handout provided). She mentioned by using the USETAPA the cost saving would be by leveraging pricing power of aggregated demand while decreasing the burdens placed on local government purchasing efforts. A motion to approve proposed resolution and send to the full legislative body was made by Commissioner Matthew Hopkins, seconded by Road superintendent Gene Barnickle, and was approved unanimously. Commissioner Baddour asked during discussion if this would be the first year to do with the FM Manager saying yes but will not be required annually to do, and the county has quite a few similar participations.

The CE then discussed the proposed balanced budget policy. He mentioned some Comptroller training that described seven steps to a healthy government and this proposed policy is trying to codify those in policy and practice. Several Commissioners stated the county has not been doing “balanced budgets” definition of which being revenue and expenditures are equal. Rather some of the recurring costs and non-recurring costs have been funded from the fund balance which in the last fiscal year budget process was “gutted” in order to have a lower increase to the property tax rate. The CE said this policy is trying to set all up for success, that the county cannot continue budgeting as has been done in the past. He noted that in the past 100% of the recurring budget was also matched in the Fund Balance; that is now 38% of the annual budget. The CE said you cannot publicize you have a balanced budget if you are dipping into your fund balance. He said the Seven Step descriptions have been given electronically to all, and if you have any edits those could be done in another meeting. He said this policy needs to be implemented before going into the next fiscal year budget discussions. Motion to approve by Commissioner Matthew Hopkins and seconded by Commissioner Evan Baddour, to start the discussion. Question to clarify non-discretionary funding given situations with a Maintenance of Effort but not state required might be difficult to identify. The CE said there would be a code identifying whether discretionary or no. Commissioner Hopkins said he would want it to read in the policy as “required” (by state). Commissioner Hopkins also

asked about justifications from Department Heads – how would that be provided with some suggesting adding another column in that section and he also said he would like to receive the information electronically making it much easy to search. Commissioner Terry Jones said only changes to the MoE should be identified. Commissioner Evan Baddour asked if after this committee's review would this go to the full legislative body for approval with the CE saying this would go into effect today. Areas such as non-profits and Fire & Rescue were mentioned with the CE said they could be funded but you couldn't mislead the public by saying it's a balanced budget. Member of the public commented why not do a 2% property tax rate increase each year to keep up with inflation rather than a large tax rate increase one year after a few years of no increase. Another member questioned why not wait until the next election to implement. Commissioner Tracy Wilburn asked if the county was prohibited in doing this policy saying every time you buy a patrol car we are going to raise taxes (if a "balanced budget" wouldn't allow budgeting for some items). The FM Manager said with an election year you don't raise taxes; this is more to let the public know what the county government is doing. Further she said because now we have no reserves and something substantial and unplanned comes up, we would have no way to fund.

Commissioner Tracy Wilburn asked if so needed why haven't we done this earlier, with the CE saying he tried to implement through suggested actions but that didn't work. Commissioner Gayle Jones asked if reflection of state laws, why need, with the CE saying that is incorrect – there is no state law requiring a balanced budget, only Comptroller recommendation. Commissioner Evan Baddour asked if policy change would need a majority approval. Commissioner Matt Rubelsky talked to breaking bad habits, last budget process tried to get back on track (with a larger property tax rate), and there was not a lot of waste in the budget that could be cut. Commissioner Wilburn talked about what happens when a county government does not pass a balanced budget, meaning the State Comptroller would decide where to cut, typically those efforts not state mandated. CE said no – if we don't pass a balanced budget and require use of Fund Balance, we simply publicize that fact. Discussion continued addressing approving a balanced budget and not having additional sources of revenue, would

result in a large number of waivers to the policy; inflation outpacing revenue and in business if you don't pass the cost on, you go out of business; tying the next elected commissioners hands, let new ones do; determining needs vs wants; newly elected commissioners usually need more than one year to learn local government fund management. Department Heads spoke to unplanned needs such as equipment failing, so often have no control over what's needed.

Commissioner Tracy Wilburn asked about clarifying capital purchase where the FM said in the past we had an account for equipment, and this year it was moved to the 171 account which has been zeroed out. Currently she said the highway department needs \$147K for a backhoe and the fund balance is healthy enough, but she questioned how long that can continue. Commissioner Terry Jones said we know that TACN will free some funding and we are already committing it to the courthouse. He mentioned the \$500K grant for infrastructure and the county match taking funds from TACN, do the fire suppression and build our funds back up. Commissioner David Adams said the county had depended on the funds received from selling the local hospital and now there is no funds. He said he would vote for a balanced budget. Member of the public spoke to trust in the county being abrogated – public perception is a belief that commission has a lot of authority that they do not have e.g., state law dictates much policy.

Commissioner Joyce Woodard said we were warned by the department that they would be coming back with additional needs. The CE commented as an example the ambulance remount. The FM Manager suggested the public go and visit with department heads and see what is being spent. She commented how conservative the department heads are. Director of Schools Vickie Beard told of the school boards schedule, i.e., work session on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month, and everything at that time is transparent. Highway Superintendent Gene Barnickle said there was a lot of misinformation on social media, with people jumping to conclusions. He said only one commissioner had asked about a particular purchase and no other person had come to the department. He said he was going to vote for this, and he would do the best job he could but inflation impacts all departments. Sheriff Purvis also invited all to come, stating he has an open door. Commissioner Evan Baddour said he plans on voting for this noting countering an

earlier comment that as Budget Chair he didn't see as violating this policy if a waiver is required, since that is called out in the policy. Question to call for a vote was moved by Commissioner Matthew Hopkins, seconded by Commissioner Erin Curry and was approved. Roll call on original motion was approved 5-2 with Commissioner Tracy Wilburn voting no and Dr. Vickie Beard voting no.

The CE said no policy is never final but we can implement, and continue working to clarify if needed. He noted all would be on line on the county webpage.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Erin Curry, seconded by Commissioner Matthew Hopkins and was approved unanimously.

ATTENDEES: County Executive Graham Stowe, School Superintendent Vickie Beard, Road Superintendent Gene Barnickle, Commissioners Evan Baddour, Tracy Wilburn, Matthew Hopkins, Erin Curry Others in Attendance – Commissioners Joyce Woodard, David Adams, James Lathrop, Annelle Guthrie, Matt Rubelsky, Judy Pruett, Terry Jones, Gayle Jones, David Wamble, Rickie Carpenter Others – FM Beth Moore-Sumners, Ms. Shana Woodard and Ms. Mary Taylor Hewitt, Finance Office, Highway Department staff Erin Harmon, and members of the public