



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES– MILLAGE RATE PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday, June 15, 2023 @ 11:00 am

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting began at 11:06 am. Mayor Reynolds conducted roll call. Council members Inman, Sheppard and Howard were in attendance. Council member Honore and Wynn were absent at the time of roll call.

Council member Wynn arrived at 11:14 am.

Council member Honore arrived at 11:29 am.

II. Public Hearing

Motion – made by Council member Howard to open Public Hearing for Millage Rate. Council member Sheppard seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

a. Report from City Administrator Donald Dejarnette

City Administrator Dejarnette explained that this year's county proposed rollback rate is 8.89 and the city is proposing to keep the same millage rate as last year at 11.021. This rate is a 23% increase over the County's proposed millage rate whereas last year it was 28% over the recommended rollback rate. He stated the city is looking to keep the same millage rate as last year to remain in line with neighboring cities and what they are doing.

b. Presentation by Persons Opposed to the change (10 minutes allotted)

Lathanza Williams stated that she doesn't know any details about the Millage Rate increase or why there is a proposed increase. City administrator Dejarnette provided the details of the proposed millage rate and clarified that Ms. William's property on Downs Place was not located in the city of Lithonia but in the city of Stonecrest.

Doreen Carter asked for clarification on why the city has decided to raise taxes. She also mentioned that her stormwater tripled without notification. She stated that in the last year, citizens taxes have doubled with no explanation from a budgetary standpoint to justify the increase. City Administrator Dejarnette explained that the proposed millage rate is 23% over the county proposed millage rollback rate just as last year's millage rate was 28% over the county proposed millage rollback rate. He clarified that this not a 23% increase over a 28% increase last year. He further explained that the city is managing the rising costs of everything just as everyone else in the current economy. He stated that the city is now working

to provide more services to its citizens, one of which being the newly added Code enforcement. City administrator Dejarnette explained that the Stormwater increase would have been discussed and voted on during a previous administration and he was not part of those discussions.

Mr. Carter said she would like the Mayor and Council to be considerate of citizens as taxes have gone up and so have many people's mortgages. She stated that you cannot tax your way out of this and she's aware of other opportunities to find funding. She then stated she was against the proposed millage rate and asked that the city revisit what took place with Stormwater. She stated that she was aware of some areas in the City's budget where the council needed to make some tough decisions while also accepting the counties rollback rate. She continued stating that she knows some decisions predate current council members but because she's familiar with the City's finances, she asked that the Mayor and Council revisit the budget and make the hard cuts they need to make. She stated that because of inflated property values, increases in taxes could potentially price some citizens out of their homes.

Mayor Reynolds expressed confusion about the city raising taxes stating that the City was not raising anything but planning to keep the same millage rate as last year. Ms. Carter went on to explain the rollback rate and how the city is indeed increasing taxes if it does not accept the rollback rate. Mayor Reynolds expressed she misunderstood but understood now. City Administrator Dejarnette clarified that the city will not be increasing the millage rate from last year.

Council member Wynn explained that the County has gone up on their taxes and asked that Ms. Carter get with her about any concerns with the actions of any previous council members whether it be in person or over the phone.

Ms. Carter explained that she was just here to ask Council to take the county's proposed millage rollback rate as to prevent the rise in her property taxes.

Council member Howard stated that if the city kept the rate at 8.89 and the property values are in fact inflated, we will still see an increase. She stated not maintaining the current millage rate would leave the city behind and that the city has struggled financially in the past. She stated that this city strives on income.

Council member Inman stated she would like to see the county's assessment breakdown from the previous year based on the current millage rate. She stated that it would help to understand the foundation. She explained that there are multiple factors such as, lifestyle, income, and current debt that all play a role in why the city is looking at approving the proposed millage rate.

Ms. Carter stated that she would like the Council to go back to review some of the decisions of previous administrations that brought Lithonia to its current place because some of them were bad decisions and have left the citizens in a bad position. She again mentioned revisiting the city's budget and making tough decisions so that the citizens are not experiencing another tax increase. She stated that she hopes council takes the rollback rate.

City Administrator Dejarnette gave the details of the upcoming millage rate public hearings.

Motion – made by Council member Inman to close the Public Hearing. Council member Wynn seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.


III. Adjournment


Motion – made by Council member Howard to adjourn. Council member Sheppard seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 11:30 am.

Attest:


Ashley Waters, City Clerk


Shemeka Reynolds, Mayor