



# BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING  
102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024 AT 5:15 P.M.  
T. PAGE THARP BUILDING  
KINCHAFOONEE CONFERENCE ROOM  
WWW.LEE.GA.US

BUDGET WORKSHOP

## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Luke Singletary, Chairman	District 2
Chris Guarnieri, Vice-Chairman	District 4
Dennis Roland, Commissioner	District 1
Billy Mathis, Commissioner	District 3
George Walls, Commissioner	District 5

## COUNTY STAFF

Christi Dockery, County Manager
Kaitlyn Good, County Clerk
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney
Heather Jones, Co-Assistant County Manager/ Finance Director

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met for a Budget Workshop on Tuesday, April 23, 2024. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Conference Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman Chris Guarnieri, and Commissioner Billy Mathis. Staff in attendance was County Manager Christi Dockery, County Clerk Kaitlyn Good, Co-Assistant County Manager/ Finance Director Heather Jones. Present from the District Attorney's Office were District Attorney Lewis Lamb, Miles O'Quinn, and Tami Peavy-Owen. Commissioner Mathis called the meeting to order at 5:20pm.

## CALL TO ORDER

### BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

#### (A) District Attorney's Office

Handouts were provided to those present from District Attorney Lewis Lamb. The District Attorney's Office has asked for an additional \$60,000.00 to be added to the departmental budget.

Mr. Lamb began the discussion by stating that the District Attorney's Office has been historically underfunded. He took over in 2018 and has gotten the office to be pretty well staffed; however, shared a need for another victims' services employee. One way Mr. Lamb cites as reason employees are staying is that they try to maintain equity in pay with no gap in pay between those employees that are state funded and the non-state employees. The following employees are paid by the state: Seven Assistant DAs, two secretaries, one victims advocate, and one investigator.

No operating funds are received from the state. The SPACER contract will renew in July in the amount of approximately \$900,000.00 for the year. There are two forms of grant funding: VOCA (issued by the Department of Justice) and ARPA Grants. VOCA has been the primary way of funding victims' services program for every DA office in Georgia as there was no state funding for these services until last year. At the end of last year, the office was notified that they would be taking a huge cut from VOCA funding from \$335,000.00 to approximately \$175,000.00, equating to approximately 2.5 positions that were lost. The state gave one paid victims advocate in exchange. Further decreases are not anticipated, at least not for another two (2) years.

In 2021, ARPA funds were made available for an administrative employee and investigator. In the second year, the ARPA awards were overextended, leading to a bulk of funds that did not get awarded. Previously the circuit received \$218,000.00 in ARPA funding and \$128,000.00 was received for the third year (2023). The ARPA funds will probably last until November 2024, leaving a net loss of approximately \$60,000.00. Mr. Lamb is hopeful that funds that were not used can be dispersed to the circuits in the next year.

Approximately 12 attorney work days and six (6) investigator work days are allotted per month to tasks such as Sumter State Court, Lee Magistrate, Lee Probate, Webster Probate, etc. that are outside of the required work

within Superior and Juvenile Courts. These are paid via contracts.

Basic expenses divided according to the caseload equals the amount listed on the submitted budget request, citing the loss of grant funds and the employee pay raises. This year, Lee County's share would come to \$169,000.00; however, this does not reflect the \$30,000.00 that Lee County pays for prosecution in Magistrate Court. Until last year, no county in the circuit paid the full amount for operations just in Superior Court; that difference is made up by doing the other tasks mentioned.

With the passing of the Victims Bill of Rights, the DA's Office must notify every victim of every case, misdemeanor or felony, of every court appearance, which requires manpower. They must also issue sub poenas and contact witnesses for trials. The DA's Office staff also helps victims apply for restitution and compensation through the state. Additionally, the office is still working through a large caseload across the circuit, including cases still backlogged from the pandemic, where trials were not happening. While the Lee County share of the caseload has gone down recently, the caseload across the whole circuit has increased as well as the severity of cases. Mr. Lamb shared that over a period of seven (7) weeks, there were five (5) killings with many of those being children, and there are pending death penalty cases as well. The workload has not decreased.

The Board will consider the request and meet at a later date to further discuss.

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

*Citizens will be allowed to address the Board of Commissioners regarding any issues or complaints. Individuals should sign up prior to the start of the meeting.*

No citizens took part in the Public Forum.

With no further comments or questions from the audience, the Public Forum was closed.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(A) The next regularly scheduled County Commission Meeting is **Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 6:00pm.**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:56PM.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
COUNTY CLERK

*Lee County is a thriving vibrant community celebrated for its value of tradition encompassing a safe family oriented community, schools of excellence, and life long opportunities for prosperity and happiness without sacrificing the rural agricultural tapestry.*

Persons with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language interpretation should contact the ADA Coordinator at (229) 759-6000 or through the Georgia Relay Service (800) 255-0056 (TDD) or (800) 355-0135 (voice). This person can be contacted at the T. Page Tharp Building in Leesburg, Georgia between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will assist citizens with special needs given proper notice of seven (7) working days. The meeting rooms and buildings are handicap accessible.