

Information on why a tax increase is needed this year:

First of all, we have been balancing the budget for the last 3 years utilizing funds from fund balance. Fund balance is now down to 9.5 million. The Board's goal was to keep it at 10 million. We are renovating the Golf course clubhouse and completing the park behind the civic center in town. Some of those funds will be sales tax and some of the funds will come out of fund balance; thereby reducing fund balance more. We have been utilizing fund balance to purchase capital expenditures to help keep the total budget down.

We have all been thrilled with the progress the Sheriff has been making on getting the drugs off of the streets in our County. But that all does come with a cost. But a cost that I'm sure we all are happy to pay to keep our kids and family members safe and drug free. It means more people in jail, more court costs, more DA costs, more officers, investigators, cars & equipment. Public Safety on a whole is an expensive venture, but one that is very important to all of us and is top on our priority list. We will be purchasing 9 new vehicles this year for the Sheriff's Department, adding 1 new investigator and 1 new deputy position. We have added another paid fireman to our fire department this year. We are adding 3 new School Resource officers so that each school now has a resource officer. The cost of the officers is a shared cost between the Board of Education & the County. The County still bears the cost of vehicles, training, etc. We have also added another secretarial position & Assistant District Attorney position (mainly to handle the drug cases) in the District Attorney's office. EMS (ambulance service) budget is up some due to the fact that we have to transport almost everyone out of town due to their request or the severity of the condition. When we have two or three ambulances out of town we have to call in a whole new crew to cover the station. It gets expensive. The jail is up because it's constantly at full capacity. That means the cost of meals and medical care is also at full capacity. So, as you can see quality public safety comes at a high cost. But we believe we have the best care and best service available.

This year we have also increased PAWS funding to upgrade and start maintaining the building. Rabun County owns the building and it is in desperate need of some maintenance and upgrades. We will be hiring someone to daily clean and maintain the building after we get it back up to the standard we would like to maintain. We are also adding another animal control officer.

We have done a lot of upgrades to the Senior Center in the past year. This year we will be replacing the carpet and some of the ceiling tiles and doing some painting to complete this upgrade.

We have almost completed the renovation of the old gym at the Recreation Department. We have added a full-time night position for this gym so that we have an employee at both gyms at night in the case of emergency or someone gets hurt. The new gym will have a small work out room with limited equipment.

The Library budget has increased to upgrade to automatic doors for the entrance to the library.

During the budget process we have reduced several budgets. We reduced the Water & Sewer appropriation by \$78,562. We reduced Public Health's budget by \$128,690. We reduced Public Welfare by \$10,500 and we reduced Development Authority's budget by \$873,968.