

**2010 CEO Budget Meeting
Stephenson Middle School
February 9, 2010**

CEO Ellis opened the session with acknowledgements of elected officials: Commissioners Connie Stokes and State Court Judge Barbara Mobley. The CEO welcomed the community and sponsors of the budget gathering. Commissioner Connie Stokes made opening comments regarding the timeline of the budget stating that by law it was to be approved and adopted by March 1, 2010.

CEO: Slide presentation of DeKalb County 2010 Budget Question

Questions/Comments:

Comment from Judge Barbara Mobley: I'm asking for consideration of the courts as part of public safety. If there are not enough judges, they (Sheriff's Department) could be releasing people from jail. The law requires people who are arrested to go before a judge within 72 hours and could be released if that does not occur.

Comments from the CEO: He thanked Judge Mobley. What you didn't say was that we haven't funded a part of Public Safety and even with the millage increase we are still cutting too much. The only way to do this is to increase milage even higher than it is.

1. I'm a senior on fixed income but I certainly want police and other first responders to come when I need them. I'm in favor of the tax increase and I am willing to cut personal spending to pay for it.

Response from the CEO: I understand the issue of fixed income. This tax increase for the average house is \$7 per month. I wish there was a simpler way to fix the economy. If it were, I don't think the president would need all these advisors. Everything you do has an impact on something and we are attempting to make this impact as small as possible to the citizens of DeKalb. We have cut the budget first.

2. We have a safety issue in 4th district.

Response from Chief O'Brien: Chief O'Brien met privately with this person during the meeting.

3. I appreciate the issues of the county but would like to see more investments in small businesses. I don't see anything in the budget that would do that.

Response from the CEO: It is in the budget. What we have provided you with this evening is an overview. The full budget with detailed information on this can be found on the DeKalb County Website. I am working with the Obama administration to overhaul our incentives for small businesses.

Response from the DCCO: We are in the beginning stages of offering new initiatives for small businesses. Burrell Ellis has directed us to have an economic summit in the next month or so and we will be releasing more details as we get closer to that date. Included in these initiatives is a small business loan revolving fund and business incubator.

Response from the Development Authority: We have established a new collaboration between Workforce Development, Economic Development and Community Development. Together, we are working to enhance incentives for businesses of small and medium size to help them survive and thrive. From this collaboration, we have developed a package of additional initiatives that are currently being reviewed by the administration to move forward. In addition, we have a \$90.8 million fund to help businesses that want to locate in DeKalb

4. *What is the approval process of the budget?*

Response from the CEO: The CEO must present the budget to the Board of Commissioners by December 15th and by March 1st the Board of Commissioners must adopt the budget. I submitted the budget to the Board of Commissioners on December 15th last year and since that date the Board of Commissioners has been deliberating it. The Board of Commissioners will likely adopt the budget at its February 23rd Regular Meeting.

5. *We need help getting our community back together after the floods.*

Response from DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA): There are a number of resources to choose from that will help you in this effort. I would suggest starting this process by going to the DeKalb County website and look up DEMA to get information on how we can help.

Response from Commissioner Connie Stokes: When we (Commissioners) get calls, we will call various departments to follow up on concerns.

6. *My question is regarding the loss of tax base when Dunwoody came. They are still in the county so what happened?*

Response from the CEO: Physically, we have lost nothing. Fiscally we suffered a major loss. Dunwoody includes Perimeter Mall and Perimeter. What they have that others don't have is an economic base of businesses and jobs. The unfair part was that only those in the area were allowed to vote on it. The question though is how do we recoup the tax base? The answer would be to go back to the legislature. Sometimes we win and sometimes not.

Also, in the case when the lady unfortunately lost her life in a fire that you may not have heard about was that the Dunwoody Police also showed up before the DeKalb Firefighters. They also did not bother to investigate the call. The City of Dunwoody did not do an investigation. We did.

8. *Law and order will keep residents in DeKalb. What I don't like is waste and it bothers me. Rockbridge Road from Stone Mountain Road is in bad shape and is without lights or sidewalks. I have attended all the meetings for the proposed Rockbridge improvements. I see waste on Brave Road with sidewalks on both sides and lighting. We need lights on Rockbridge Road so that we do not kill someone.*

Response from Public Works: For Rockbridge Road, in the area for which you speak, we are going to receive an earmark to make the improvements you mentioned. Sidewalks on Hugh Howell is from park bond money to connect from park land to Stone Mountain. What your argument shows is how bond money is earmarked.

Response from the CEO: Overall, I agree with your sentiments. We need to reduce waste. The purpose for our Inspector General is to root out both waste and fraud.

9. *Can you fix the pot holes?*

Response from the CEO: We are pushing up the HOST to at least 95% which means we have less for infrastructure, but we are depending on stimulus money for most of our infrastructure improvements. Fortunately, we have not neglected our infrastructure. We have done a relatively good job funding infrastructure improvements. Yes, we fix potholes when our employees identify them or when the public notifies our Public Works Department.

10. *My proposal would be to shift some of the cuts away from the prosecutors so that accused can have their day in court.*

Response from the CEO: Without the 1.25 mill these things will be missing. Others will be left out. Instead of 150 you are saying maybe we should cut half of the fund for the public defender office and cut deeper somewhere else. That is a possibility.

11. *My question is what was accomplished from the 2009 budget presentation. I question how are we are doing with Inspector General and the Office of Accountability.*

Response from the CEO: Every year we face a challenging budget. An appropriate way to put together a budget is to look at what is important. Public safety and efficiency are two of the most important priorities in our budget. As far as what I recommended in the 2009 budget, we talked about consolidating departments which we did (311 Department). We wanted to expand our library system which we did but are not able to do now. I proposed a public safety director position to coordinate the efforts of first responders and this was accomplished. The coordination of public safety paid off was when we had the September floods. We did a good job of accomplishing things in 2009 but we have more work to do. Assuming the passing of this budget, we will have an inspector general which will help us root out fraud and waste. This position was not recommended until the current budget.

12. *My suggestion is to hire employees and companies who live within the county*

Response from the CEO: We do not have a residency requirement to work for DeKalb County. I think it would be harsh to do that at this time or the employees would have to sell their homes. A component of public safety is code enforcement. We are working with the state law department so that we may use a group of volunteers to do code enforcement.

Comment from Judge Ralph Merck: If we can get volunteers, the court can handle these additional cases.