

Here are the highlights of the second of four County Commission district meetings in Cotton Valley Community Center on 24Jan at 6 p.m. (NOTE: next meeting will be in District 3, Shorter area, at the Prairie View Farm Community Center.)

All commissioners, less Mike Berry, attended. The amount of citizens was a little fewer than the first meeting, but a better turnout than I have seen there in a long time. Ms. Young from the school board filled in for Dr. Brooks.

Getting the simple one out of the way, Chairman Maxwell went into the discussion on the \$300 legislative transfer of annual deposits to the Montgomery YMCA to come back to the county commission for recreation. The chair answered “no” to a question if Macon County was doing the same with the Union Springs YMCA.

Next up was the 1-cent sales tax for the school system. Statements made asking for increasing the rate – a positive expression, however forgetting the many citizens residing in poverty. Frank Dillman stated that he would support the 1-cent sales tax for the school system, which is to sunset in 2 years. Michael Johnson further said he too would support the school sales tax. Not a lot of questions pertained to the tax; several general questions were asked and answered.

The \$25/parcel fee for the ambulance service received more comments from the audience. Dillman said there are inequities in the policy while giving the chairman a map of a 3.1 acre of land parcel measuring 1360 feet in length with a creek passing through the land; no location for a home on the parcel. Dillman also stated persons living in mobile homes on someone else’s land, would not be required to pay the \$25.00 because the landowner would receive the bill. Commissioner Miles Robinson said this policy is working in other counties.

Michael Johnson, dovetailed on Dillman’s “inequity” comment and stated he would have a plan for fee during the next meeting,

Commissioner Drew Thompson again introduced the 6-cent fuel tax. Commissioner Coach Huffman and County Engineer contributed heavily for the citizens to support the fee, Robinson to a lesser extent. Thompson said the money will be allocated, 1-cent to the Economic Development Authority and 5-cents to the county and the money would be utilized for materials and contracts, nothing else; Maxwell said “and overtime,” to which “don’t open that door,” blurted Dillman and Maxwell received a tough glance from Thompson. Dillman also proposed to support the citizens of Macon County and inasmuch as the school board is expected to receive the 1-cent sales tax, the fuel tax should be reduced the comparable 1-cent.

When Dillman began inquiring about transparency and the citizens possessing a vote, Maxwell interrupted “we heard you at the last meeting”. Dillman countered I am speaking to the citizens and Maxwell replied, “No, you are speaking to us.” Dillman turned and faced the audience advising them that we should have the vote on this tax.

Following the meeting, Dillman learned from Thompson that this 6-cent fuel tax is not in addition to the current- 2-cent but a complete replacement to 5-cent policy the county was hoping for a few years back. Ouch. Someone neglected to mention that or properly convey that to the citizens. Thompson also said in reply to Dillman’s request for a referendum, a special election is expensive, which prompted Dillman to interrupt saying

there is a statewide primary in March of next year; acknowledging nothing will take place September or October, why can't we have the vote?