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County taxes
Harold D. Powell

Shorter residents are expressing concerns over the recent announcement of efforts by the Macon County Commission to increase almost a handful of taxes in the County. Already concerned about the potential impact of proposed state tax increases, some residents complained the new taxes would be too much for them to pay.

Most of those speaking out have been seniors on fixed incomes concerned about the potential added burden of new taxes on their bottom line. They indicated the new taxes could cause them to have to forgo purchasing needed medicines to cover the new taxes along with utilities costs. The tax increase proposal is also beginning to receive immediate pushback from some business interests and its potential impact on future growth for their companies.

The issue is certain to heat up as mayors and town councils from across the County will be forced to take a stand on the proposed effort. Just like the County, the municipalities have struggled to provide services with reduced revenues and declining populations. For the Town of Shorter, the approach has been to cut costs where possible and recruit new businesses to produce needed revenue. The idea behind the effort is to allow growth and economic development to occur without burdening them with heavy taxes.

The proposal comes at an interesting time as the County Commission and municipal governments begin to gear up for the early stages of upcoming elections. There must be some compelling reason behind the current push by the County Commission to have these measures implemented at such a critical point for them politically. Typically, issues such as this are handled in the early goings of an elected term, as is the current case with just reelected Alabama Governor Robert Bentley.

Most politically savvy politicians avoid bringing up issues such as tax increases out of the fear of drawing an opponent out who has a single issue campaign for voters to decide on. Rarely have I seen the proponent of taxing the people win in a scenario like that.

This issue is certain to draw new candidates out of the woodwork as many begin building their platform for office. The issue will certainly put the legislative delegation of Sen. Billy Beasley and Rep. Pebbelin Warren in a difficult position as they have to decide how to address this issue while simultaneously deciding what to do about proposed state tax increase proposals.

While I haven't seen the actual proposals and admittedly am not aware of what the plans are for the new money, I tend to oppose tax increases. I will in the coming days, learn more about the County proposals and will — for now — withhold judgement on the issue.

From the government side, I understand the desire to fix roads and provide services to citizens.

As a realtor/small businessman, I also understand the impact of increased taxes on the marketability and attractiveness of an area for home owners and the business community.

With those points in mind, I believe a balanced approach to how we fund government and what is the appropriate level of taxation can be found.

I encourage each of you to study the issue and look into how these new taxes impact you. As citizens, we should expect a good and thorough explanation of the plans for the funds and know what the return would be for our financial investment.

At the end of the day, this discussion will be good for the County as we will and should consider what our future looks like.