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Knockin' 'bout Notasulga
Frank Dillman

For those who attended the Macon County Commission's District 4 local legislation information session and those who viewed the event's recording on Youtube "TuskegeeVirtual," channel, you might wonder what happened to the three original county tax requests of the legislature frequently written about the last three weeks.

Over the last three weeks, The Tuskegee News had numerous pieces discussing the ramifications of the county commission requests, legislative resolutions for a 5-cent fuel, rental, and occupational tax that would have been economically troublesome for municipalities, businesses, taxpayers and the economy.

However, unknown to the community and State Rep. Pebblin Warren things changed.

Commission Chairman Louis Maxwell's presentation (salesmanship) at the April 8 district meeting did nothing to clear the air. On the other hand, it created confusion, not what was presented but what was not talked about.

The upwards of \$1 million in new taxes per year, first reported by The Tuskegee News' Jackie Carlisle, was collectively labeled as "rumors" and "all kinds of stuff," per Maxwell.

Beginning the April 8 meeting, Maxwell stated the meeting was to discuss the only "two" legislative resolutions requested by the county commission without "debate."

The first discussed item was the county's request for staggered commission terms.

The "other" request of the legislative delegation, Maxwell stated, is a "two-cent gas tax" to be equally divided for economic development and road and bridge maintenance. In truth, there is no such resolution — only a legislative modified one.

Addressing one of several questions, "You are asking the citizens to make sacrifices, what will the commission sacrifice?" Maxwell's answer was in effect, "nothing, we already have," supported by Commissioner Mike Berry. However, Maxwell did admit further in his response that if the county had more money he would like to travel more — spoken by a politician with our purse strings.

District 4 resident Jimmy McGhar told me via telephone he too was confused with what was not discussed.

The following day, I asked Warren if she received one or three resolutions from the commission for more taxes. She answered "three." She thought the original three resolutions were still in play.

To my request, Warren emailed me a copy of the three county tax resolutions, which along with the video and other related writings, can be seen at <http://www.frankdillman.com/macon-taxes.htm>.

Four days after Carlisle's report, a local campaign was launched to educate the county about these three documented requests for taxation, including an email to State Sen. Billy Beasley and Rep. Warren asking them to see through the county's "greed."

Speaking with Berry after Warren and I last spoke, Berry told me "about two weeks ago" Beasley said he would not support the rental and occupational tax "because he agreed with you," and he would only support a two-cent tax per gallon, not the requested five-cent tax.

The two-week reference may have been after the March 23 email, which demonstrates our voices were heard.

Moreover, the script of Macon County Commission Goes Wild provides a clear example of why Macon County needs greater transparency with its own website containing links to recorded county meetings, meeting agendas and minutes, documents such as working and finalized budgets and county restructuring to move forward.

Bottom line — each of the three original resolutions are still viable as of this Monday morning, April 13, regardless of what Maxwell stated during the "first-hand information" session.

It appears the commission feels the more citizens don't know of the original resolutions the better. Citizen push back and economic sense by our legislative delegation caused the trashing of two bills and cutting the third by 60 percent by Beasley while the other half of our legislative delegation, Warren, and the public were lead to believe otherwise.

Some might say the bill for the two-cent gas tax will not pass because it is too late in the session. To that point, I argue, local bills fly about the statehouse during the closing days with such speed that heads are lowered.

Unlike Maxwell, I asked our two legislators to provide for a local referendum on the new tax.

Most importantly, the legislative calendar does not negate the commission's intent. Where is the admission and apology for their behavior?

The shameful behavior of the commission's intent to tax us for government growth, including Maxwell's "travel," while subsequently hiding their actions from the public is justification for a changing of the guard at the 2016 polls.

Macon County deserves better leadership.