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**June 2, 2023**

## **Sales Tax Dollars Could Save Citizens a Tax Hike Without Impacting Schools** **Washington County Commissioners Search for Ways to Balance the Budget During Budget Sessions**

*(Jonesborough, Tenn.)* – Washington County Commissioners are looking at all ways to save costs and avoid a tax increase. All county departments have made a huge effort to scrutinize for savings and expense reduction while realizing the need for salaries to be competitive. About \$4 million in sales tax revenue can be captured from reserves without impacting the county school operating budget.

“Washington County very much supports our kids and their education,” said Mayor Joe Grandy. “The schools are fully funded, and they have assets in reserve. Recognizing that inflation has taken the buying power from everyone, now is the time to tap into the reserves.”

Grandy said that Washington County wants to be able to offer the same services without increasing the taxpayer burden. He added that the school budget is not impacted because they have not budgeted this reserve revenue in the past, nor is the reserve revenue included in the proposed FY 24 budget.

Unlike all other counties in Tennessee who split their sales tax dollars between general government and the schools, Washington County sends 100% to the school system. Washington County is the only one of Tennessee’s 95 counties to allocate funding that way.

According to Grandy, capturing these reserve, sales tax funds will balance the county budget, without impacting the operating budget of the Washington County school system.

“While we applaud the school system for giving teachers’ salary increases, county employee salaries also are being addressed to maintain the services,” Grandy said.

“Like everyone at home, county costs have gone up,” said Commissioner Larry England. “We are looking at every means possible to do the right thing for our citizens. Our commissioners have listened to the public and it is clear they do not want a county property tax increase this year.”

“I can’t see raising taxes when we have elderly people in my community who have to pay their taxes on a monthly payment plan,” said Commissioner Tucker during the May 25 County budget workshop.

**History:**

In 1990 the county commission temporarily allocated the county’s share of local sales tax to fund the school’s budget rather than increase property tax. That temporary allocation was never undone. Now the county is in the reverse situation with county government costs increasing more than its revenues.

The next county budget committee workshop will be held at 9 am Monday, June 5 at the Historic Courthouse in Jonesborough.

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