

*TCTA Presentation to Council, 5 May 2009*

President Foster, members of the Council, I am Owen Wormser, President of the Talbot County Taxpayers Association. On behalf of our ever-growing membership, it is my pleasure to provide our Association's input to your deliberations surrounding the County's proposed FY 2010 budget.

As you already know from our letter to each of you, we have spent considerable time in review and analysis of this budget and hope our input will be well received.

My purpose this afternoon is to further underscore the seriousness we associate with regard to our four major concerns conveyed in our letter.

The Directors of the Talbot County Taxpayers Association representing their membership commend

the County Council and County Manager for several significant accomplishments during preparation of the proposed FY 2010 budget and during execution of the FY 2009 budget. Most notable is this budget's appropriate response to very difficult economic conditions; thank you for your efforts on behalf of all Talbot taxpayers.

We are concerned revenues projected for FY 2010 and beyond may well be considerably less than current projections, especially revenues derived from county income taxes, recordation taxes, transfer taxes, and development impact fees. This potential impact on both Operating and Capital expenditures will require skilled and careful fiscal management to weather the economic difficulties we anticipate being the norm over the next 4-7 years.

Our review of the proposed FY 2010 budget produced four areas of major concern:

- Our first area of major concern is the capital expenditure of \$6,000,000 for a multi-sport facility to be built at the Talbot County Community Center. Our Association opposes this expenditure for the following reasons:
- There has not been a Statement of Need or a requirements study made available to the public according to our research. Thus, there is no known documented need upon which to base such a significant expenditure of taxpayer dollars on a facility we believe is extraneous to Talbot County needs at this time due to many other important priorities competing for scarce resources. To wit: Public Safety, Emergency Medical Services, roads and

grounds, classroom teacher's salaries, vocational training, to name but a few.

- Though Department of Parks & Recreation intends to provide scheduled transportation to and from this new facility, from after school until late evening, we do not concur with an expenditure of taxpayer dollars for such an enterprise when capital investment in vehicles, transportation insurance, fuel, maintenance, and personnel costs are all experiencing exponential cost increases.
- We are aware of some limited discussions between the Easton YMCA and our County staff about the planned expansion of indoor sport facilities at the "Y", there has not been an adequate exploration of alternatives for the multi-sport facility planned for the Community Center. Some

argue the “Y” could change leadership and close the door on use of their facility. If this is a widely held view, the question should then arise as to what are the legitimate alternatives and to what extent have these been explored and reported to the public with the end result being selection of the Community Center site? We are not aware of any such efforts.

- Our second area of significant concern is the FY 2010 Budget Message. We believe the 2010 “Budget Message” is woefully short on information normally presented in a Budget Message, to wit: what is the vision across how many years, what goals and metrics have been prepared to achieve the vision; and, what resources will be expected to meet these goals? Earlier Budget Messages suffer from this same

lack of public information but, looking forward, the Council, County Manager, and Finance Officer have an opportunity to correct this shortcoming.

- Our third concern is the delay in Glebe Road upgrade. We do not understand the delay in rectifying Glebe Road's known public safety deficiencies. Though capital improvement funds have been appropriated for several years now, a continued delay points directly at our concern about how assigning countywide budget priorities are undertaken. It appears to us the process is undisciplined and unstructured. Glebe road is well-known as being dangerous; it deserves immediate attention and corrective action due to the increase in traffic flow attempting to circumvent Waterside

Village and the Route 33, Route 322 Bypass, Bay Street intersection area. In addition, a recent spate of accidents, one resulting in death, call out for urgent corrective action.

- Finally, our fourth concern focuses on the Bay Street property acquisition. Over the coming years, we will monitor closely the Bay Street County office building development. The fact that an additional \$4.3M is being projected in the 2010 CIP for this complex is of concern to the Association. To date, we have not seen nor been made aware of a Statement of Need nor any requirements study to justify first the purchase of the property and now its conceptual “mission creep”.

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There are a number of lesser issues about which we are prepared to discuss should Council members care to do so. In closing, the Association's Directors wish to thank Mr. John Lehner, County Finance Officer, for his time, effort, and responsiveness in helping us understand the complexities and competing demands within the County's FY 2010 proposed budget.

Thank you for your attention, I am available to answer any questions you may have.