



## Officials say public safety fee is a dead issue

Budget deficit could deplete reserves

08/18/05

**Randall Franks**

[Respond to this story](#)

[Email this story to a friend](#)

.. While five out of five Catoosa County commissioners agree that a proposed public safety fee is now a dead issue, questions remain as to whether commissioners will make any cuts in the already approved 2005-06 budget, which contains a \$1.184 million deficit.



Carl Henson

If commissioners had approved safety fees — \$300 for commercial businesses, \$3,000 for industry, \$75 for multi-family dwellings, like apartments, and \$25 for single family dwellings — the funds raised were to be dedicated to specific public service projects to help balance the budget.

Without the fees and with no property tax increase, which commissioners unanimously voted against last month, the budget shortfall will be filled from the county's reserve, or emergency funds.

Catoosa County Chief Financial Officer Carl Henson recently told commissioners that the county is now following a backwards trend in its financial plan.

"We are really headed back in the wrong direction after two years of going

in the right direction," he said.

Henson said officials recommend 25 percent of a local government's budget should be reserve funds. He said over the last two years the county's reserve fund went from a negative balance to just over \$4 million.



Ken Marks

He said about \$1 million of those funds are already earmarked to pay for methane extraction wells at the former Catoosa County Landfill, along with the impact fee study balance and renovations at the new Department of Family and Children Services building.

Henson said these numbers do not take into account the \$1.184 million shortfall in the 2005-06 budget. If the county makes no change in course, the reserve fund balance could drop below \$2 million by the end of the next fiscal year, he sa

id.



**Pictures of Community**

**NORTHWEST Georgia**  
BUSINESS CARD GUIDE  
[CLICK HERE](#)

Messenger

[Search tips](#) [Advanced](#)

**Features**

[Local TV Listings](#)

"There is no additional projected revenues to recoup these funds," he said.

Henson added that the impact of rising fuel costs on the pocketbooks of those that shop in the community will probably lessen county sales tax revenues.



Bobby Winters

He said this year's tax collections are \$238,000 less than last year.

"It's not a good trend," Henson said.

Commissioner Ken Marks, who proposed the public safety fee as an alternative to a one-mill property tax increase, said commissioners can amend the budget throughout the year.

He said there are areas that need to be trimmed but he wants to see how the expected passage in December of impact fees for developers and the promised \$2.5 million from the federal government for transportation improvements might help replenish the budget.

Chairman Bill Clark said the board voted down several of his proposed cuts before approving the budget.

"Unless someone is going to come up with other ideas there is not much to do," he said.

"We can't do anything until we get a third vote (majority)," Commissioner Bobby Winters said. "Until somebody sees really what needs to be done."

**CLICK HERE:** [Express your opinion. Send a letter to the editor.](#)

**CLICK HERE:** [Get all the local news and sports with a subscription to The Catoosa County News](#)

©2004 [MyWebPal.com](#). All rights reserved.  
Contact us at [webmaster@mywebpal.com](mailto:webmaster@mywebpal.com)  
All other trademarks and Registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.