August 27, 2012

Honorable Members of the Okaloosa County Commission:

By this letter, your budget staff formally transmits the recommended 2012-2013 Okaloosa County Budget. This document has been prepared through a cooperative effort between the County Administrator's Office and the Clerk to the Board’s Finance Office.

As noted during the Board’s Budget Policy Workshop in April, the primary fiscal concern continues to be the county’s General Fund, which has declined for six consecutive years while many expenses beyond the control of the Board have continued to increase. To offset these factors without an increase of taxes, the Board has implemented many strategies including, 1) reduced staffing and operational expenses, 2) delay of vehicles and equipment replacements 3) limiting of capital projects and 4) the drawing down of discretionary reserves.

As outlined in the policy workshop, the reduction of expenses must continue absent of revenues increasing. While the decline in property values has slowed, the challenge this year has been greater as a result of less cash carry forward than originally estimated and the declining ability to rely upon use of discretionary reserves to balance the General Fund. The proposed budget represents a continued effort to shrink General Fund operations while using the Board’s prioritization of services through the Strategic Plan. Staff plans to provide the Board during the departmental workshops additional means to reduce General Fund expenses that would require ordinance revisions.

Please note the recommended budget is balanced with $350,000 less than the Sheriff’s requested budget. As a result, both the recommended budget and the Sheriff’s requested budget have been included in this transmittal for the board’s final determination.

POLICY OVERVIEW

On April 10, 2012, the Board of County Commissioners met in workshop session to discuss its budget policy for Fiscal Year 2012-2013, hereafter referred to as Fiscal Year 2013. This policy discussion guided your staff as we prepared next year’s spending plan for your consideration.

A quick review of the policies set by the Board includes:
1. Continuing decline in property valuations and other reduced revenue projections will require further reductions in services, operational costs and capital projects.

2. The Board of County Commissioners would like to hold the millage rate at no higher than the present 3.2899 mills.

3. Salary adjustments for employees would likely include no market adjustments or merit (performance) increases for Fiscal Year 2013.

4. Downsizing of government operations will likely require further downsizing of staff except as identified for certain enterprise/proprietary operations.

5. If possible, the Board should target a General Fund Reserve of 8.00% or approximately 30 days of operating cash.

6. Minimal replacement vehicles will be considered this year and staff will continue to work on reducing the overall number of vehicles.

7. Funding losses may require reductions and/or elimination of funds for existing civic and social programs.

8. Staff will utilize the Board’s adopted Strategic Plan for prioritization of funding where possible.

9. The Board will continue utilization of Performance-Based Budgeting for county departments and requested Constitutional Offices continue to provide detailed budget data for public examination.

**BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

**Millage Rate:** The millage rate as presented is 3.2899 mills, which is below the currently calculated State mandated capped tax rate. Due to declining property values, this rate provides $708,695 less than last year in county-wide taxes. The total of ad valorem tax revenues included in the tentative Fiscal Year 2013 budget is $42,363,259. Of that total, $471,878 is generated from new construction being placed on the tax rolls. The total proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2013 is $257,059,862, which is a decrease of $4,565,069 from the current year original budget. This 1.70% decrease is mainly due to reduction in built up unused Capital Outlay reserve amounts transferred out in Fiscal Year 2012 that were necessary to fund General Fund operations in Fiscal Year 2012.

**Salary Adjustments:** In 2005, the Board approved a new Pay and Classification Plan that included a merit compensation of 1.00 to 3.00%. The Board voted to discontinue merit increases beginning Fiscal Year 2009 through the present. The last market adjustment was awarded in Fiscal Year 2009 in the amount of a 2.00% increase. For discussion purposes, $623,167 ($205,174 - General Fund, $133,091 - Enterprise Fund and $284,902 - Constitutional Officers) is required for each additional 1.00% increase for
either a merit or market adjustment for employees of the Board and Constitutional Officers.

Beginning on July 1, 2011, the Florida Retirement System (FRS) became contributory. All employees, excluding DROP participants and rehired retirees ineligible for reenrollment in the FRS, were required to contribute 3.00% of their earnings pre-tax toward their retirement. On July 5, 2011, the Board approved a 3.00% pay increase for employees affected by the new FRS requirement, effective the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2011 and the entire Fiscal Year 2012, which will remain in place. There are no pay increases for employees included in the Fiscal Year 2013 proposed budget.

Reorganization: Last year, county departments were restructured to streamline the number of department directors for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. Significant cost savings were realized through the reassignment of duties and elimination of nearly the entire Administrative Services department budget including the positions of Assistant County Administrator and Executive Assistant II, as well as elimination of the Corrections Director position upon retirement of the incumbent. Total savings realized from these three position eliminations was $338,319 annually. Additionally, $8,980 was eliminated from operating expenses for the Administrative Services Department. The departments formerly reporting to the Assistant County Administrator were redistributed among the Public Works Director, Public Safety Director, Human Resources Director and Administrative Manager. Any further consideration of department director impacts, including compensation and title changes, were deferred until Fiscal Year 2013.

This year, the positions affected by the reorganization were reviewed by The Mercer Group, Inc., an external consulting group. The Mercer Group’s final recommendation indicated that pay considerations were appropriate for some of the positions affected by the reorganization; however, due to the County’s current budget challenges, no pay considerations for these positions have been proposed in the Fiscal Year 2013 budget. Therefore, pay considerations for identified affected reorganization positions are being deferred another fiscal year and will be reviewed during the Fiscal Year 2014 budget process.

Board of County Commissioners Positions: The proposed budget includes an overall addition of one (1) position for the Board of County Commissioners staffing. Since Fiscal Year 2008, a total of 137 positions have been eliminated from Board staff. The following is an overview of the position changes proposed for this next fiscal year.

1. Airports. One (1) Project Manager position has been eliminated.

2. Corrections. The inmate population has continued to increase. To meet the mandated housing and officer to inmate ratio requirements, add five (5) Correctional Officer I positions.

3. Human Resources. One (1) Human Resources Generalist position has been eliminated.
4. Public Works. To more effectively cover the assigned maintenance area, add one (1) Light Equipment Operator in the Road Division. This addition is a result of splitting a higher level vacant position into two Light Equipment Operator positions and therefore will require no additional funding.

5. Water & Sewer. The following positions have been eliminated: One (1) Executive Assistant I, one (1) Customer Service Supervisor and one (1) Utilities GIS Analyst II, for an overall reduction of three (3) positions.

Benefits. The Group Health Insurance program costs will increase by 3% with Florida Blue keeping the present plans in place. The county will continue to provide a base plan while also making a buy-up plan available for those who wish to elect richer benefits. Pharmacy coverage will continue at the present $15/$50/$80 co-pay program. Since October 2008, Okaloosa County has participated in a ProShare agreement with Florida Blue. This year the County received $1,132,761.00 in premium refunds for a 3 year period. This ProShare rebate was used to suspend the $40 per month employee contribution as part of the Fiscal Year 2012 budget and has been used to suspend the $40 per month employee contribution as part of the proposed Fiscal Year 2013 budget. In addition, the 3% renewal increase to the County has been offset by the ProShare rebate as part of the proposed Fiscal Year 2013 budget. Employees with family coverage will experience a 3% increase in premiums.

As directed by the Board, proposals were solicited for dental, statutory life and long term disability benefits. On August 7, 2012, the Board approved transferring the dental insurance to United Concordia and the life and long term disability insurance to PRISM/Symetra. These changes resulted in approximately $115 per employee annual savings for Okaloosa County.

For Fiscal Year 2013, the per employee cost for health, statutory life, dental and long term disability insurance benefits will increase from an actual cost of $9,903 to $10,070 with $762 offset by the ProShare rebate ($9,308 per year budgeted). In addition, approximately 133 BCC employees receive a stipend of $100.00 per month because they are covered elsewhere and opt out of the county health insurance program. Historically, the budget included funding for 100% participation. The proposed Fiscal Year 2013 budget includes funding more closely in line with the actual participation rate of 85%.

The county’s property, liability and workers compensation excess insurance coverage is expected to increase by 5% to 15%. Staff will work closely with brokers to negotiate a flat premium renewal with options that will allow Okaloosa County to continue its effective protected insurance program.

Reserves: The proposed General Fund budget provides reserves of $3,090,265 as compared to $2,684,137 provided in last year’s budget. This establishes a reserve of 8.4% in the General Fund, excluding constitutional officer budget appropriations.
**Capital Projects:** The Capital Outlay Construction Trust Fund includes several projects or reserves for future capital outlay this next year and includes “unrestricted” reserves in the Capital Outlay Judicial Department of $2,650,000 and in the Capital Outlay Reserve Department of $1,500,000.

**Shalimar Courthouse Annex.** Earlier this year the Board sought and obtained a judicial determination on the required uses at the Shalimar Courthouse Annex in order to ensure compliance with the facility’s original reverter clause. Following the court’s determination on the required uses an appeal was filed by the defendants that has resulted in the planned renovation project being delayed pending a final resolution. Assuming the court’s decision is upheld sometime in calendar year 2013, the Board can immediately begin this project by securing the necessary funds by bank loan where the anticipated debt service on this project would be more than met in rent savings. The planned renovations include offices for the Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator, Supervisor of Elections, Sheriff Offices, Clerk of the Circuit Court offices court facilities, Property Appraiser and Tax Collector. The renovation project has a preliminary total estimate of $6,000,000.

**Old Fort Walton Beach Hospital.** The work to create the operational space leased to Elder Services continues. The abatement portion of the project should be completed within the next 60-75 days. The abatement work was bid out as three phases with the abatement of the Elder Services’ space being the base bid. The remodeling of the Elder Services leased space will be completed after the abatement and will take 90 additional days to complete. The roof of this facility is nearly 20 years old and is at the end of its useful life. Recent budget estimates to replace the entire roof suggest that the cost will be in the $500,000 - $750,000 range. The in-house cost of remodeling is currently about $21 per square foot, not including asbestos or lead abatement. Planned uses for the facility include relocating the County’s Information Systems, Traffic Management Center and Growth Management Departments and an additional 30,000 square feet of space for other county departments and constitutional offices that are currently in leased offices. The cost estimate to fully remodel this facility is estimated in the range of $900,000 - $1,000,000. Staff will provide the Board additional information to determine a timetable and funding options for the full remodeling project during the budget workshops.

**Public Works/Stormwater.** The Stormwater Division continues to track and address stormwater issues. A 319 grant, for approximately $700,000 with a $300,000 match, has been received to begin work in the Gap Creek area. This required $300,000 match will deplete the capital stormwater funds with the remaining balance in the Stormwater Division utilized to address catastrophic failures of aging infrastructure. Gas tax revenues will be utilized for stormwater improvements in Foxwood Phase 2 and Lighthouse Church Road. Utilization of gas tax funds for stormwater improvements is only permissible when combined with road way improvements. Performing work with gas tax funds will allow for some major stormwater improvements but are not a long-term solution for the need of a dedicated stormwater funding source. The Board has granted approval to amend the Stormwater Master Plan in an effort to develop a list of
stormwater capital projects that would possibly meet the criteria for State Revolving Fund loans. Compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit continues to be a priority which is essential to avoid possible compliance penalties from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

**Solid Waste.** Okaloosa County provides solid waste collection and disposal services as well as recycling services to franchise areas located in unincorporated areas of the county. The Solid Waste Division, through its contractor Waste Management, successfully completed an enhanced recycling pilot in the unincorporated areas of Shalimar for approximately 2,300 homes. Garbage service was reduced to once a week while recycling service was upsized from an 18-gallon bin to a 96-gallon roll-cart. A proposal will be presented to the Board for expanding the enhanced recycling service throughout the franchise areas of the county. It is anticipated that this will result in increased revenues to the solid waste fund, a reduction in customer rates, and assist the County in meeting the State mandated recycling goal of 75% by the year 2020. The result was a significant decrease in the amount of garbage disposed of and a significant increase in the amount of recyclables generated at the curb.

The Solid Waste program includes management of environmental liabilities at three County Landfills; Wright, Baker and Niceville. Remediation modifications were solicited and acquired from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for systems installed at Wright and Baker. These remediation modifications included infrastructure modifications that reduce the treatment footprint and allowed the County to withdraw from active remediation on off-site properties. A reduction in the monitoring requirements for all three landfills was negotiated in Fiscal Year 2012 which reduced monitoring expenses through Fiscal Year 2013. The Niceville Landfill Pilot Study is currently underway and the results of this effort will be analyzed and compiled in Fiscal Year 2013. Compliance with regulatory requirements will drive all landfill remediation efforts in Fiscal Year 2013 through a streamlined operation and maintenance schedule. Solid Waste staff will continue to pursue opportunities to reduce the cost of these environmental liabilities throughout Fiscal Year 2013.

**Public Works/Transportation.** Okaloosa County maintains 207 miles of dirt roads, 74 miles of cold mix base stabilized roads, 658 miles of paved roads, and 73 bridges and large box culverts. The County accepted approximately 3.28 miles of paved roads into the maintenance system in Fiscal Year 2012. Recent tax revenue projections indicate they continue to stabilize with the Constitutional Gas Tax (CGT-80%) contribution projected to be $1,430,000 and Local Option Gas Tax (LOGT -3 of 6 cents) to be $1,700,000. Resurfacing revenues will be $100,000 LOGT and $400,000 CGT funding. This revenue will make it possible in Fiscal Year 2013 to preserve/resurface 22+ miles of asphalt roads; continue the road striping program; convert (dirt to pave) Gilmore, Robinson and State Line Roads, and place asphalt millings on several additional roads in the north-central area of the county. Additionally, we will begin design work on Phase II of the Foxwood subdivision drainage retrofit and resurfacing. Research also continues for possible solutions on Okaloosa Lane. For Fiscal Year 2013 the Bridge Section budgeted to convert one moderate length wooden bridge to concrete at a materials cost of $200,000.
to continue our 20-year program to convert all wood bridges to concrete. To reduce the burden on the General Fund, staff elected to move operational expenses related to Road Grader annual leases, road construction materials and sign materials totaling $676,000 from the County Transportation Trust Fund to the Road and Bridge Construction Fund for Fiscal Year 2013.

**Parks.** The Parks Division is responsible for improving and maintaining 59 park properties in accordance with the Parks Master Plan. The implementation of the parks reservation system at Baker Park, Garden City Park, Shalimar Elementary Park, and Shalimar Port Dixie Park over the last year has provided additional access to park areas for more teams and organizations. The new reservation system allows groups and organizations to reserve fields that are not being utilized by the Associations. These fields are used for practice or games for a fee. The Parks Division continues to maintain a cost split between the Unincorporated (MSTU) Parks and the County Parks of 65% and 35% respectively. The proposed budget includes consideration to significantly shift funding from the General Fund to Tourist Development revenues to provide maintenance and repairs for identified “tourist destination” beach accessways and park facilities. Projects included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2013 budget include Marler Park pavilion repairs, Don and Susan Stillwell Park (Phase II, Garnier’s Plant Site), and improvements at Wilderness Landing, Laurel Hill/Dorcas Path, Choctawmar Park, Woodlands Park, Baker Park irrigation well and piping, and Lake Silver pavilions.

**Water & Sewer.** Demolition of the old Garniers treatment plant is complete. Virtually all of the equipment and debris from the project was recycled with $155,923 collected to offset demolition expenses. The project was delivered at $450,000 under budget. Water & Sewer staff is working with Eglin AFB staff to prepare to implement the diversion of the flows from four existing wastewater plants to the new Arbennie Pritchett Water Reclamation Facility. Construction on the Duke Field portion is underway. In addition, staff is preparing to respond to an expected RFP from Eglin for the privatization of water distribution and wastewater collection systems.

The Main Island Lift Station has reached the end of its useful life and requires replacement at a total estimated cost of $2,500,000. This is a classic aging infrastructure situation. Much of the construction will be performed in-house by OCWS forces. Construction is scheduled to begin in Fiscal Year 2013.

The City of Fort Walton Beach has approached the County about sharing costs for part of the construction of a new City sewer force main up to the County’s Arbennie Pritchett WRF. An interlocal agreement will be presented to the respective bodies to implement this project. This is an opportunity to share costs for replacing the County’s two very old 20” force mains which were converted from conveying treated effluent to conveying raw wastewater.

A new public water supply well (Del Cerro II) will be constructed near the intersection of Chestnut and Okaloosa Lane. Estimated cost is $1,150,000 with construction scheduled to begin in Fiscal Year 2013.
In partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers and NW Florida Water Management District, Water & Sewer staff is proceeding with analysis and evaluation of a strategy to implement plans for direct withdrawal from the Shoal River with an off-line storage reservoir. These planning activities are necessary to implement a long-term strategy of conjunctive use with existing groundwater resources in order to provide for sustainability of public water supply.

Northwest Florida Regional Airport. The Remote Overnight (RON) Apron at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport was completed in 2010 for the purpose of providing overnight parking of aircraft adjacent to the Cargo/Maintenance Facility. In an effort to provide lighting and Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) receptacles for aircraft utilizing this apron, this project will include the design and preparation of bidding documents to install high mast lights and APU receptacles along the east edge of the apron. The estimated construction is approximately $368,000 to be funded from Passenger Facility Charges (PFC’s).

Eglin’s current response time for aircraft emergencies does not meet the FAA requirement for commercial aviation. Eglin has proposed an ARFF facility on the airfield to meet the need. The estimated cost is about $3,000,000 with FAA participation of $2,700,000 from the Military Airport Program, State and Local funding with local funds from PFC’s.

The Airport Police Station project at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport is proposed to include a two-story 2,200 square-foot police station located adjacent to the baggage screening area and southwest of the TSA security check and will be accessible through the existing terminal. The first floor will include public access, criminal processing/holding, and locker rooms and the second floor will include office space. The building will be designed to withstand a category 5 hurricane. The estimated design is approximately $67,000 and construction is approximately $595,000. PFC funding is anticipated.

Bob Sikes Airport. The existing 8,000 ft by 50 ft asphalt taxiway at Bob Sikes Airport is more than 20 years old and is exhibiting signs of deterioration. This project will rehabilitate the existing pavement and widen areas to 75 feet for taxiways serving the anticipated larger aircraft per FAA design standards. Construction will provide an aircraft holding area on the south end of the taxiway, construct storm water improvements, and relocate the existing taxiway edge lights and airfield guidance signs. The estimated construction is approximately $11,470,048. Construction continues in Fiscal Year 2013 from Fiscal Year 2012.

Destin Airport. The project consists of providing all labor, materials and other means of construction necessary for the rehabilitation of Runway 14-32 and paved overruns. Construction includes variable depth pavement milling and P-401 asphalt overlay, removal of the existing runway edge lighting system, installation of new runway edge lighting system to include lights, signs, base cans, conduit and cable. The project also includes topsoil shoulder adjustment, sod placement, and pavement marking. The
estimated construction cost is approximately $3,200,000. The Airport share will be from PFC's.

**TDC/Beach Restoration.** Okaloosa County has been successful in obtaining joint coastal permits for beach restoration projects for Okaloosa Island and Western Destin. Additionally, the County prevailed in multiple legal challenges to the issuance of these permits as well as a legal challenge to the funding for these projects. The Board realized the importance of these permits but voted not to construct the Okaloosa Island project at the current time. The joint coastal permits are valid for 5 years and are potentially renewable. The Board did vote to fund the Western Destin project that is slated for construction in the next 8-9 months. Through an interlocal agreement between Okaloosa County and the City of Destin, the County will fund this beach restoration project along approximately 1.15 miles of beach in Western Destin. The funding for this project will come from the 1st cent of the Tourist Development Tax and the beach restoration MSBU. The Western Destin project area is designated as “critically eroded” by the state. Restoration of this beach will provide storm damage reduction and recreational benefits to all county citizens.

In lieu of a complete restoration project on Okaloosa Island, a proposed beach project for the Island would include a 3.1 mile dune enhancement project with a construction cost not to exceed $1,000,000. Fifty percent of the funding for the construction will come from the 1st cent of the Tourist Development Tax and fifty percent will come from FDEP grant H5OK1. This project will help stabilize the fragile dune system providing protection for upland infrastructure as well as enhancing the local ecosystem.

**Miscellaneous Issues:**

1. **Fleet Operations.** Fiscal Year 2013 will be the sixth consecutive year with the county’s General Fund fleet having no significant replacement of equipment and vehicles. Currently there are 74 vehicles, including twelve ambulances, within the fleet ranging from 150,000 to 335,000 miles. Lack of timely replacements has resulted in a drop in reliability and an increased frequency of repairs, many of which are major. The Board’s most urgent fleet needs are the replacement of ambulances, dump trucks, work trucks and specialized pieces of heavy equipment. The Fiscal Year 2013 General Fund departments include replacement of only two ambulances. *An additional briefing document has been attached to this letter to provide further details on the status of the county’s fleet and related equipment.*

2. **Department of Corrections.** Declining inmate population at the county jail in recent years has not only allowed the county to place on hold a previously planned addition to the facility, but has also afforded the closure of existing housing units. The closing of the housing units provided for staffing reductions in both Fiscal Years 2011 and Fiscal Year 2012. Recent population trends have been reversing and a growing inmate population may soon require reactivation of housing units and the augmenting of existing staffing. The additional of five new correctional officer positions has been included in the proposed budget and will allow the Department of Corrections to reopen a 78-bed
housing unit at a net cost of $217,655.87. An additional briefing document has been attached to this letter to provide further details on the status of the county jail’s population trends and housing unit staffing requirements.

3. Information Systems/Computers & File Servers. Systems and Networks manage more than 600 computers for departments of the Board. Over 360 computers are five years or older and need to be replaced. To be on a five-year rotation of replacement it is necessary to purchase 125 computers each year at an estimated $90,000. Additionally, Systems and Networks also manage over 85 servers that provide applications and data to departments and offices. These servers are the core of County operations and 51 of them are over five years old and need to be replaced before rendering departments without the technical resources to accomplish their missions. Regular computer and server replacements has not been funded for several years so $100,000 has been included in the proposed budget to begin a limited replacement cycle for computers and servers. An additional briefing document has been attached to this letter to provide further details on the status of the county’s hardware, software and network resources.

4. Reductions to Social Services/Museums/Libraries & other agencies. Consistent with the declining revenues and the prioritization of services, funding to these agencies has been reduced annually for the past several year. Due to the condition of the General Fund, funding has been reduced to one half the current funding in the proposed budget to Head Start, Day Care Services, Shelter House, Baker Block Museum, Destin Fishing Museum, the Heritage Museum and Elder Services. Additionally, the proposed budget includes a 4.00% reduction to Economic Development Council (EDC), Bridgeway - Baker Act Services and the Crisis Stabilization Unit, the Soil Conservation District, the Library Cooperative and the Child Protection Team. The Okaloosa Island Fire District’s funding was reduced consistent with the reduction in property values at 2.00%.

5. Okaloosa County Transit The Transit budget proposed for Fiscal Year 2013 does not include any funding for the two Crestview fixed routes or the express route (Crestview/Fort Walton Connector), but does maintain funding for the four Fort Walton Beach routes, route 20 (Santa Rosa Blvd) and the three tourism routes. The Fort Walton routes are to be paid with a combination of FTA and Board funds, Route 20 with FTA funds, while the three tourism routes are to be paid using FDOT corridor funds which can only be used on the US 98 corridor with no local match required. Paratransit services will remain in place, though it is anticipated that demand will increase due to the loss of fixed routes, and it is extremely likely that non-essential trips will be denied. The continued reduction of the general fund contribution will result in a faster drawdown of the other revenue (including most importantly FTA funds) which will affect transit planning in future years, beginning with Fiscal Year 2013.

6. Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs). The county has five Community Redevelopment Agencies in four cities (Destin (2), Crestview, Cinco Bayou and Fort Walton Beach). The total funding for the next Fiscal Year is anticipated to be $1,134,404.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort by Mr. Gary Stanford, Finance Director, Mr. David Skarzynski, Budget Manager, Ms. Sandee Launch from the County Administrator’s Office, John Hofstad, Public Works Director and Ms. Kay Godwin and Ms. GinNeal McVay from the Human Resources Department for their assistance in developing this proposed budget. I would also like to commend our staff and the constitutional officers for their cooperation through the budget reviews and for the additional work to provide the detail within the document.

Respectfully submitted,

James D. Curry
Okaloosa County Administrator