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Douglas Commission Approves \$3.63M in Cuts

Included are 10 percent operational cuts from county departments totaling roughly \$688,000.

By [Michael Stone](#) [Email the author](#) June 8, 2011

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Since 2007, Douglas County's general fund budget had decreased by almost \$3 million when the current budget of \$77,350,000 was adopted in December.

On Tuesday, as a result rising fuel costs, declining property values and falling revenues, the Board of Commissioners approved cutting an additional \$3.63 million.

"It's no different from every family in Douglas County having to cut their budget, and we're doing the same thing. ... We will still provide the services that we continue to provide," [Commission Chairman Tom Worthan](#) said at Tuesday's commission meeting.

The cuts come about five months into the 2011 fiscal year since Douglas County's fiscal calendar coincides with the regular calendar year.

One thing that has helped avoid bigger cuts during current economical woes: The board instituted a hiring freeze in 2008 and "has filled only mission-critical positions since that time," says a statement released prior to Tuesday's meeting.

The county has 882 employees with 42 frozen or unfilled positions, the release from county spokesman Wes Tallon says.

County departments were asked about two months ago by [County Administrator Eric Linton](#) to cut their operational budgets by 10 percent, totaling roughly \$690,000. Law enforcement, courts and judicial were not included in the departmental cuts.

Worthan says in the release that law enforcement cuts were not being considered since "the protection of the lives and property of our citizens is a government's first priority," and that crime usually climbs during times of economic distress.

Judicial and courts were exempt since courts "must continue to efficiently function to process cases and dispense justice on the Constitution-mandated timely manner," the release reads.

Other savings were made from:

- \$512,000 in eliminations and deferrals from roadway projects.
- \$390,000 by eliminating funding for the new football field at [Boundary Waters Park](#).
- \$1.95 million from a one-time reimbursement from the county's pension fund, which is managed by the Association of County Commissioners of

Georgia. "Douglas County has overpaid its pension account for the past few years and has an approximate \$3 million 'cushion,'" the release says.
• \$130,000 in a revenue increase from the county's EMS. The number is based on an estimate for the last six months of 2011.

The board anticipated a 5 percent decline in the property digest when planning for the current budget, the release says. The Board of Assessors and tax commissioner are now expecting between 5 and 7 percent.

Parks, libraries and the Douglas County Courthouse will remain open at their normal hours, Worthan said in the release.

The county's finance committee prepared the budget cut plan, which is attached to this article. The committee is made up of Worthan, Linton, [Commissioner Kelly Robinson](#), [Finance Director Jennifer Hallman](#) and other staff members.

"We barely made it through. ... This was tough. This was very tough," Robinson said at Tuesday's meeting. "We're based with a very short-term, very soft economy, so we're not out of the woods yet. We're still going to have to walk this thing out very prudently over the next year or so."

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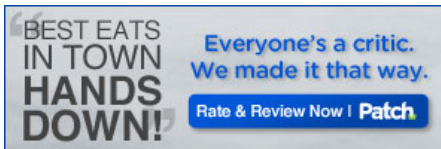
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