

PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
JANUARY 17, 2007 MINUTES

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met on Wednesday, January 17, 2007, at 4:00 PM for a Special Called Meeting in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina.

Commissioners present:

Beth Ward, Chairman
Mark Owens, Jr., Vice Chairman
Melvin McLawhorn, Commissioner
Eugene James, Commissioner
Kenneth Ross, Commissioner
Jimmy Garris, Commissioner
David Hammond, Commissioner
Tom Johnson, Commissioner
Kenneth Ross, Commissioner

Staff present:

Scott Elliott, County Manager
Trish Staton, Clerk to the Board
Janis Gallagher, Assistant County Attorney
Melonie Bryant, Deputy County Manager, Financial Services
Phil Dickerson, Deputy County Manager/Public Services
Michael Taylor, Chief Information Officer

Call to Order

Meeting Notes

Chairman Ward called the Special Called meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Roll Call

Invocation and Pledge

Meeting Notes

The Invocation was offered by Commissioner Garris.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Chairman Owens.

Approval of Agenda

Motion:

Approval of agenda as submitted.

Motion made by Commissioner Melvin McLawhorn.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Jimmy Garris.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

Review of December 18, 2006 – Chairman Ward

Chairman Ward said the Special EMS Study Committee (S-EMS-SC) met today at 3:00. She said the Committee met to discuss a motion made by the Board of Commissioners on December 18, 2006. Chairman Ward said after hearing squads, citizen and elected officials input, the Commissioners voted to send the recommendation back to the S-EMS-SC. Chairman Ward read the motion:

Send the recommendation back to the Special EMS Committee to pursue the proposal from the Town of Bethel to see if we can do something North of the River to save money whereby we can take that money and put it into the three QRV's and have them brought back up to a full transport station and consider other things that have been brought forward and bring it back to the Board of Commissioners no later than the end of January.

Chairman Ward said the Board of Commissioners is not looking at a new plan. She stated that they are looking at the recommendations that came from the citizens and the commissioners, and applied to the previous plan.

Chairman Ward explained that a QRV would become paramedic 24/7 at peak time and non peak time.

Chairman Ward said County Manager, Scott Elliott and staff have met with a private entity and the squad representative from the association. She said their recommendations went before the S-EMS-SC today and voted unanimously to come before the Board of Commissioners.

Present Proposals Changes to Previous Plan - Scott Elliott

Mr. Elliott reviewed the Impact on System with AmbuMed North of the River Proposal.

The 'North of the River' component of the overall EMS plan was to be re-examined with the associated savings to be allocated back into the system. Attached you will find an updated copy of AmbuMed's proposal dated January 12th. Below you will find several points that relate to an analysis of this matter.

- North of the River service area as granted to a private entity (AmbuMed) could result in system savings of a net \$300K.
- Proposal would serve the Bethel station, Pactolus station, Staton House/Ind. Park QRV as well as add a new 'paramedic ambulance' to the Belvoir/Bethel area.
- Some of the associated cost savings by privatizing the North of the River area would be dedicated to bringing the three QRV units back to paramedic transport status.
- North of the River service area would be billed & collected (transports) by private entity (AmbuMed).

Attached you will find a funding table entitled "Impact on System with AmbuMed 'North of the River' Proposal". This table takes the proposed AmbuMed savings and distributes them into the system. The allocations in the table are derived from past and current conversations that have occurred concerning this matter.

Cost savings as estimated through AmbuMed's proposal are as follows:

\$400 K - Cost to provide service
- \$100 K - County's loss of transport revenue

\$300 K - Est. net savings

Contract negotiations with AmbuMed would need to commence as soon as the plan is approved. This would be needed in order to plan for a July 1 implementation.

Chairman Ward said the proposal was delivered to the S-EMS-SC and the commissioners late yesterday.

Commissioner James motioned to approve the recommendation from AmbuMed.

Commissioner Garris seconded.

Discussion:

Commissioner McLawhorn said his concern is for the citizens that will be affected by the plan submitted by AmbuMed. He said he has received several calls from citizens stating they would keep the EMS plan as it is and pay a tax increase. Commissioner McLawhorn said he wants to do the right thing.

Commissioner Johnson said he has thought about this. The consensus seems to be citizens are willing to pay a higher tax to keep the services the way as they've had them.

Commissioner Johnson made a substitute motion to keep the system as is and raise the tax 1 penny.

Commissioner Ross seconded.

Commissioner Garris said he has received several calls. The original plan was to have three stations at the QRV level. This plan being discussed today resolves that issue. All three of those squads are now full emergency transporting stations. He said this is an improvement over what was in place and answers some of the concerns. Commissioner Garris said the proposal before the board today increase the coverage North of the River. This is a positive point. He said the Over Site Committee is important.

Vice Chairman Owens said he is in support of the first motion. He spoke about the areas North of the River that have been neglected. He said one cent will not accomplish what needs to be done. He said in the pass he was opposed to privatization. Vice Chairman Owens said he is willing to try the proposal and if services are not adequate for the citizens then the Board can come back and change it. He said if it's proved it will not work then the Board can come back and look at a tax increase.

Commissioner Ross said he has talked with the citizens in his district. The citizens do not want to change the EMS services. They are not for privatization. He said if services are taken from North of River other squads will be taken. He said he is against privatization. He said he has to do what is best for his district.

Commissioner Coulson said he is against privatization of EMS services. He said it is a big mistake. He said he is against QRV. Services should be fully funded through the county. Commissioner Coulson said the tax increase should be 2 cent not 1 cent. He said he can't support a 1 cent because it will not go far enough. The increase coverage North of River and a 2 cent tax increase would cover everything. A 2 cent keeps the service under the county.

Commissioner Coulson asked Commissioner Johnson to amend the motion with a 2 cent sales tax increase.

Commissioner Hammond spoke about living in the City of Greenville. He said the citizens he represents feels left out. He said he has spoken to citizens outside of his district and didn't find anyone who wanted there rescues service privatized. He said he was told they would pay for a tax increase.

Commissioner James spoke about taxes being high enough. He said the citizens of Grifton, Bell Arthur and Fountain would like to remain without raising taxes. He said North of the River needs better service. Commissioner James said he would like the best services for the citizens but you have to be able to afford it.

Chairman Ward said the responsibility of EMS has been placed in all the Counties of the State of North Carolina's hands. Any decisions made would have to be made by the County Commissioners. She said when she came on the board, the county was distributing \$10,000 to the squads. This proposal came about because the State has put this on the county without any money coming down to implement it. The amount of money from the 4 cent EMS tax was never enough.

Commissioner Johnson made a substitute motion to keep the system at 24/7 paramedic coverage and raise the tax 2 cent.

Commissioner Ross seconded.

Vote Record:

Melvin McLawhorn	Yes
Jimmy Garris	No
Mark Owens, Jr.	No
Beth Ward	No
Tom Coulson	Yes
Eugene James	No
Tom Johnson	Yes
David Hammond	No

Kenneth Ross Yes

Total Yes Votes: 4

Total No Votes: 5

Motion Failed.

Commissioner James motion to accept revised proposal on the plan presented December 18, 2006.

Commissioner Garris seconded.

Vote Record:

Melvin McLawhorn No

Jimmy Garris Yes

Mark Owens, Jr. Yes

Beth Ward Yes

Tom Coulson No

Eugene James Yes

Tom Johnson No

David Hammond Yes

Kenneth Ross No

Total Yes Votes: 5

Total No Votes: 4

Motion Passed.

Commissioners' Comments

Vice Chairman Owens thanked everyone for coming and their concern.

Commissioner McLawhorn said he hoped the decision they made will be for the betterment of the county. He said he has reservations about the decision.

Chairman Ward said this is a plan that will be implemented. She said the Over Site Committee will be meeting bi-monthly. If things are not going well they will be spoken to at that time and not wait until then end of the year.

Adjourn

Motion:

Adjournment of meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner David Hammond.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Eugene James.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Staton
Clerk to the Board