

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
FEBRUARY 22, 1999**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop session meeting on Monday, February 22, 1999, at 8:30 a.m. in the Holiday Inn Express, Moye Boulevard, Greenville, North Carolina with the following commissioners present:

Eugene James, Chairman  
Jeffrey E. Savage, Vice Chairman  
Glenn Bowen, Commissioner  
Charles P. Gaskins, Commissioner  
David Hammond, Commissioner  
Thomas H. Johnson, Commissioner  
Mark W. Owens, Jr., Commissioner  
M. Theresa Shank, Commissioner  
Beth B. Ward, Commissioner

Also present were:

Thomas B. Robinson, County Manager  
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney  
Susan J. Banks, Clerk to the Board  
Arlen Holt, PIO and Cable Coordinator  
John K. Bulow, Assistant Manager  
Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services

**Call to Order** and welcome by Chairman James.

Prayer by Commissioner Johnson.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Robinson said that he needed to add an item concerning the Eastern Regional Basketball Tournament which is hosted by Pitt County Schools.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Savage, seconded by Commissioner Hammond, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

**Social Services - Ed Garrison**

Mr. Garrison presented the mission for the Social Services department and what he considered the future needs for the 1999-2004 years. The five issues of concern were: Child Support Enforcement, Day Care for Children, Work First, Transportation, and Adult services.

**Child Support:**

Mr. Garrison stated that an immediate need was for ten new workers for Child Support Enforcement. Mr. Garrison said there were three options for maintaining the

IVD Child Support Program: (1) to maintain status quo, (2) bring program a point where it can accomplish its mission which will pay for itself, or privatize the program. He reminded the Board of Commissioners that if the IV program were privatized, the Board of Commissioners would still be responsible for the program. He informed them that there would be a need of twenty-eight additional positions over the next five years to maintain the programs and additional office space.

### **Adult Services:**

Mr. Garrison stated that Adult Care Services are monitored and licensed by the Adult Home Specialist. He also stated that there is a need for approval for emergency assistance for clients who are experiencing a one-time crisis situation which is processed by the Intake Social Work Staff. To carry out their mission with increased caseloads, they will need three additional staff in FY 1999-2000 and an additional eleven staff members by 2004, as well as additional office space.

### **Work First Program:**

Mr. Garrison stated that child day care and transportation are barriers for the Work First Program. He reported that they are helping 1200 children on a daily basis and there are 380 children on a waiting list. Transportation is a problem which is documented by the statistics provided. As the future goes on, Mr. Garrison stated that he would be coming to the Board to get help with these program. He stated that next year, the Department of Social Services will begin administering the Head Start Wrap-Around program for Pitt County and would need additional office space.

### **Transportation:**

Mr. Garrison stated that in the area of transportation, Social Services has some immediate needs: the addition of 4-5 workers and one support staff to take on the task of transportation for the agency as a whole. This would centralize all transportation services needed for the citizens of Pitt County by providing easier access for both clients and vendors, and would provide a more seamless approach for utilizing appropriate funding sources to meet a client's and/or families needs.

Mr. Garrison re-stressed the need for additional office space which will be compounded with filling the additional positions that are requested. He stated that the two major administrative problems facing the Social Services Department in the immediate future and for the next five to ten years are: (1) additional space for the staff to meet the growing demands for services and (2) information systems.

Commissioner Savage said he was apprehensive about considering privatizing child support services. Mr. Robinson said that this area lost money last year. He also stated that if the County provides workers, over the next ten years the County would actually be making money. But, if this program were privatized, it would cut down on the need for additional office space. He stated that some systems that have been privatized, in other counties were looked into and that for the first ones, it was beneficial, but the situation has now changed and they are not recommending privatization.

Mr. Robinson stated that they have discussed allowing Social Services to use the Commissioners' Auditorium, if the Board moves forward on building an Administrative Building to house the Commissioners' meeting room, Manager's office, Finance, Human Resources, Public Information Office and the Legal Department. He stated that he would submit a five year capital needs plan during the budgetary process.

Mr. Robinson provided the Board with the following project list:

**Project List**

Animal Shelter	\$800,000
New Administration Building	3,000,000
Expansion of IV-D Building	1,120,000
Renovations to DSS Building	250,000
Courthouse Phase II	<u>6,000,000</u>
Total	\$11,170,000

Mr. Robinson stated that he was not prepared to make a recommendation at this point. He said that he was looking to reduce the County debt level and to resolve the current building needs for the Schools. He stated that he was looking to the Hospital for disposition of the County Office Building property. Commissioner James expressed concern over the debt level but Ms. Bryan explained that the County was in good shape financially. She stated that if the County goes over 10% in debt then it would be in trouble.

The Board members discussed questions they had for Mr. Garrison on Social Services items and the building needs.

**Pitt County Community Schools - Alice Keene**

Ms. Alice Keene, Director of Community Schools, introduced members of her staff and Advisory Council. She stated she had been working with James Rhodes, County Planner and Phil Dickerson, County Engineer.

Ms. Keene provided a summary of the program, master plan and reviewed the community schools partnership. She stated that they have developed six major program areas over the twenty years she has worked with the community schools. She provided a thorough report on recreation in the community stating that citizens of all ages are served including special populations. Ms. Keene noted that over 1150 youth are involved in the program, 260 volunteer coaches, with 700 children participating in the summer programs. She also stated that there are nearly 7,000 volunteers and 45,000 hours volunteered on an annual basis. Community Schools and Recreation provide programs for at-risk youth, senior games, exercise and after-school programs. Ms. Keene reviewed the history behind the growth of the program. The athletic teams depend on school facilities and they have developed a strong interagency relationships as well.

Ms. Keene stated that in 1996 they started talking about having a regional park and developed a survey of county residents. She reviewed the major findings which expressed support for recreation, nature and outdoors recreation and activities which would be supported with tax dollars. She presented the report to the Board and the Board recommended that countywide opportunities should be considered. Since then Ms. Keene has met with Bob Wendley at ECU and last Spring the Board added recreation to the title of her program. Ms. Keene reviewed the major findings and presented the Board with the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- continue school parks
- recreation a part of county land use plans
- a home for community Schools and Recreation  
(intergenerational center - preschool to senior citizens with active recreation areas)
- look for district/regional park, including natural areas, water area, etc.
- continue working on Coastal Carolina Rail/Trails

Ms. Keene stated that the Partners in Success partnerships have made resources available with Pioneer Spirit. Board members praised Ms. Keene on the success of her programs. Mr. Rhodes spoke on the progress of the Coastal Carolina Trails Project. He stated that the rails to trails project covers 16-18 miles across Pitt and into other counties being a 30 mile regional trail. He stated they were very surprised at the support they received. They did a walking assessment in March and July of 1998 and found it is in very good shape. They are developing a master plan for the 30 mile segment. He stated that they have utilized many volunteers on this project. North Carolina Tourism has awarded a \$6500 grant for a feasibility study and Weyerhaeuser has also donated \$5,000. Great opportunity.

Mr. Robinson said his recommendation for the Board was to look for a permanent location or home for community schools. Mr. Robinson said there is an eighty-eight acre tract of land on Forlines Road, which could be the permanent home for community schools. He said they could target twenty-eight acres which is not needed for the high school (which property is currently being purchased). He said they could turn it into an activity park.

Commissioner James stated his support for moving forward with the permanent home for community schools and instructed the Manager to begin working towards this goal. He also stated that James Rhodes would have to face hunters concerned with the rails to trails project.

Commissioner Ward stated that there has been enormous impact on the citizens by having these recreation programs. Ms. Keene acknowledged the hard work her staff has provided over the years for community schools and recreation.

### **Rescue Services - Bobby Joyner, Emergency Management Coordinator**

Mr. Bobby Joyner, Emergency Management Coordinator, introduced his staff, James McCotter, Randy Skinner, and Tab Mills. He reported that there are also 1130

volunteers that without them would cost this county over \$3 million to provide the same services.

Mr. Joyner reviewed rescue concerns. He reported there are 11 rescue squads in Pitt County with nine being corporations and two fall under town charter, Bethel and Greenville. Mr. Joyner said there are no basic rescue squads in Pitt County, that they are all intermediate or paramedic rankings. He also informed the Board that Pitt County's Medical Director is a function of Pitt County Memorial Hospital. He did indicate that they cannot get volunteers to the extent that they used to. He reported that there are not many consistencies between each squad.

Mr. Joyner reported that last year \$821,054 was spent on rescue squad expenses.

Mr. Joyner reviewed the individual differences among the squads. He said that something needs to be done to bring them back together. At the last Rescue Association meeting they considered the County contracting with the rescue association and then the rescue Association contracting with the squads. He stated that they also looked at other possibilities because many of the squads need additional funds. He stated that they are not recommending getting rid of volunteer squads but there needs to be a better effort and program put in place. He said in 1991 the State came in and did a survey on the squads and the County followed their recommendations. He suggested the County needs to ask the State to come again in and look at the total picture in Pitt County. He said that all squads need funds and they also need to provide a unified level of service. He said that volunteer squads are not what they used to be 15 years ago and typically the volunteers must work regular jobs and are not always available.

Commissioner Savage asked what role the Board should play. Mr. Joyner said the County should continue to fund the squads, possibly create a countywide rescue tax, establish a service district, or establish a fee for service. He stated the County has always supported fire/rescue and are now looking at a growing County and they need to plan for the future. Commissioner Owens stated that the County must not upset the volunteers. He said a plan needs to be developed that is compatible with what the volunteers need. Commissioner James agreed with Commissioner Owens.

Mr. Bulow, Assistant Manager, said that there have been situations that indicate that the rescue squads are having trouble meeting community needs. Some of the squads need some help. He recommended an outside party come in and look at the system and make recommendations. Commissioner Shank asked what the Board would expect of the consultants. Mr. Bulow said that they need someone to take an objective look at the whole system and that the Rescue Association members have some preconceived ideas. He said there are eleven different agendas and there is no consensus among the squads. He stated that citizens are not always being picked up in a timely manner. Commissioner Hammond said that some people call rescue so they can see a doctor in the emergency room which is quicker than as a walk-in patient. He said every citizen should have rescue services available and let the Hospital decide if it is an emergency. Commissioner Johnson said one of the issues is change and a need to look at response times.

Commissioner Ward said that each squad should be dealt with individually. Commissioner Ward suggested the staff would be more knowledgeable than a consultant coming in and reviewing the situation. Commissioner James said there needs to be more planning. Mr. Robinson said Mr. Bulow and Mr. Joyner want the authority to go to the State and request someone neutral to come in and make recommendation.

Ms. Helen Reel, Captain of Farmville Rescue said some departments can afford to hire people and that they need funding to get full time people on staff. She said the County could spend \$50,000 for a consultant to tell us what we already know. She suggested Mr. Joyner could work with the State.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Shank, seconded by Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to authorize Bobby Joyner to contact the State to come in and make a recommendation for on Pitt County's rescue needs.

### **Animal Control - John Bulow, Assistant Manager**

Mr. Bulow reported that the County continues to receive numerous calls on animal control issues that there is no ordinance which offers assistance. He said that generally it is not the animal owner, but the neighbor who has a complaint. Mr. Bulow stated that there are four issues at hand as follows:

1. Euthanasia
2. Adoption
3. Animal Shelter
4. Animal Control Ordinance

Mr. Bulow reported that the Animal Shelter currently imposes euthanasia by properly accepted veterinarian methods. He stated that from his perspective that is the most efficient procedure. There are 3,000 animals per year euthanized or 271 animals a month over last year. He said the better solution is adoption but we don't have the staff to dedicate to this procedure. He stated that they would like to send out a request for proposals to the Humane Society and the SPCA for a better way to handle these animals. Currently the County only responds to calls which involve rabies control. The proposed animal control ordinance is based on a nuisance ordinance. This ordinance would allow a citizen to take an animal which was on their property, but did not belong to them, to the animal shelter. Mr. Bulow stated that Nimette Soli helped to write the proposed ordinance after surveying all 100 counties' animal control ordinances. Mr. Bulow said that the ordinance was sent to every hunting club in Pitt County and only one was returned with comments. If the dog or animal is neutered, the citizen would pay \$5.00 to get their animal back, otherwise there would be a \$25.00 charge.

Commissioner Savage said he did not want to see another ordinance and that dogs serve more as pets in the rural areas. Commissioner Hammond talked about animal control, rabies tag, and ways to get rid of dogs when they are in someone else's yard. Commissioner Bowen said if a neighbor's dog destroys property then the individual should go to small claims court. Commissioner Shank stated she wanted

time to review the proposed ordinance. Mr. Bulow said it was his intention to bring the proposed animal control ordinance back to the Board in April. Commissioner Johnson noted that quite a bit of time has gone into preparation of this ordinance and that there has been an effort to consider special interest groups. Commissioner Ward stated that this ordinance should make the animal owner the responsible party. She also stated that there is a real problem with dogs roaming school campuses out in the County. Commissioner Bowen asked how many animal control officers are on staff. Mr. Paul Andrews, Environmental Health Director, stated that there are three animal control officers. Mr. Andrews stated that it was his desire to try to stop people from shooting each other's dogs and he hopes that this ordinance can be enforced with the same number of officers. He said they want the authority to take dogs to the animal shelter if they become a nuisance. Commissioner James needs more time to consider this. Mr. Andrews stated that in many instances people get out of hand and start shooting animals, which is what he would like to prevent. Mr. Bulow stated that a large part of the problem with animals are in subdivisions where it is inappropriate to be shooting.

Commissioner Savage said this is a growing County and the Board is being asked to address this situation but it does not have to be in the form of an ordinance. Commissioner James said the trick is to get them neutered.

Mr. Bulow informed the Board that the Animal Shelter is jointly operated by the City and the County. The County built the Shelter and the City operates the shelter. The County pays \$46,000 per year for its operation. The Shelter was built in 1985 with 2600 sq. ft and now it is too small and ineffective. There is no ventilation, no area to show animals, and inadequate Administration area. Cats are being stored in the Manager's office area. He stated that adoption is a better alternative but it is labor intensive.

Mr. Bulow stated that the heating system at the Animal shelter is not good and the Shelter cannot be expanded because it backs up to a subdivision. He said the current location is not good and they need to relocate it to the Pitt County landfill. Commissioner James said it needs to move to the landfill.

Our concerns are we need to: 1) work in conjunction with Veterinarians in the County 2) spade animals, and 3) work aggressively towards adoption of pets. Mr. Bulow said staff is demoralized under the current working conditions.

Mr. Robinson asked for general consensus from the Board to look at preliminary designs for an Animal Shelter. He said if the County is going to borrow money this need could be added to the financing package. Commissioner Bowen stated he would not be in support of a new building. Commissioner Savage supported moving the building or function to the landfill but was not in support of building a new building.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Owens, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to ask the Manager to look into the Animal Shelter matter and bring a recommendation back to the Board.

Mr. Robinson said the staff is trying to take a common sense approach to the situation. Mr. Bulow asked that the Board members read the ordinance.

Chairman James called for a break at this time.

Chairman James called the meeting back to order.

Mr. Robinson stated he wanted to go over what he had been doing in total quality management with the County staff. He discussed who our customer is and the need to know that citizens are satisfied with services. He stated that the staff has been working to establish a vision, mission, stakeholders needs, values, etc. He presented a slogan for possible consideration. Mr. Robinson said that he would like the Board to take action to support the efforts for total quality management. He said he wanted each department to develop their own visions, missions, goals and objectives, service benchmarks, and receive customer feedback on programs and services. The objective is to be more productive with public dollars.

Commissioner Hammond stated that the Board needs to do long range planning and start moving towards these goals. Commissioner Shank said that she is a certified trainer in this area and that the leadership must embrace this concept and be totally committed to it. Mr. Robinson said that last year he did a strategic planning session with the Board.

Chairman James announced that the joint meeting with the Mental Health Area Board on March 24<sup>th</sup> was canceled.

He also announced that the Board has been invited to attend the presentation of the Golden "A" awards at 7:00 p.m. at the Auditorium in the Agricultural Building. Mr. Paul Andrews stated that ninety-five establishments were being recognized for maintaining a 95% rating or above for the entire year.

Chairman James thanked the commissioners for attending this meeting.

Mr. Robinson asked if the Board wished to schedule another meeting with the School Board. Commissioners expressed the opinion that several of their questions and issues were not addressed at the last joint meeting with the School Board. It was a consensus of the Board to instruct the Manager to inform the School Board that they still have some unresolved items to discuss.

Mr. Robinson informed the Board that the Eastern Regional Basketball tournament which is being held in Pitt County at a cost of \$32,000 to \$33,000 was short \$6,000 and the County will be in danger of this tournament going to Raleigh if it cannot be fully funded. He stated that the Chamber, the City, and the County could split the cost three ways.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Owens, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to split the \$6,000 cost between the Chamber, the City of Greenville, and Pitt County, with each entity appropriating \$2,000.

**UPON MOTION** by Vice Chairman Savage, seconded by Commissioner Hammond, the Board voted to adjourn this meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC  
Clerk to the Board