

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
June 9, 1999**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop session on Wednesday, June 9, 1999, at 7:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Auditorium, 1717 West 5th Street, Pitt County Office Building, Greenville, North Carolina, with the following commissioners present:

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

Absent:

Charles P. Gaskins, 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.

The Invocation was given by Commissioner Ward.
The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Shank.

Chairman James called the meeting to order. He stated that Commissioner Gaskins had been in the hospital today and had asked the Board for an excused absence.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to approve an excused absence for Commissioner Gaskins due to illness.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman James asked for approval of the agenda.

Mr. Robinson stated that he needed to add a request for further instructions on the Board's request for information on merging the County's Mental Health Center with other counties and whether or not the Search Committee should continue their objective to find a new Area Director for Mental Health.

Chairman James said merging mental health programs is a last resort but the Board should consider all the options and is also in favor of continuing looking for an Area Director. Commissioner Bowen said he would want to go to a multi-county program only as a last resort.

Commissioner Hammond arrived at this time.

Mr. Robinson said that the Mental Health Search Committee is ready to advertise. Commissioner Shank said that if people think the County is going in the direction of multi-county, it may make hiring a director more difficult.

Vice Chairman Savage arrived at this time.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Vice Chairman Savage stated that he had received a Legislative Alert from NACo concerning support of federal funding to the local airport. He asked the Board to endorse a letter provided by Jim Turcotte to send to the U.S. Congress in support of additional funding for airports.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Vice Chairman Savage, the Board voted unanimously to endorse a letter of support for federal funding for the Pitt-Greenville Airport to be sent to the U.S. Congress.

Budget Message by Manager

Mr. Robinson said there are very few changes from the recommended budget originally presented. There is a four percent increase in the overall budget. He reviewed the proposed Capital Improvement Plan and called to the Board's attention any changes that had been made. He said that he had looked closely at the capital improvement plan. The new additions included funding for the administration building with \$2.7 million in certificates of participation; Phase II of the courthouse; animal shelter; Sheriff's ID lab, firing range; Emergency Equipment; and Mental Health upgrade. He also stated that he had an increase in Inspection Fees to cover the hiring of one additional inspector per Phil Dickerson, County Engineer's request. He stated that they have discussed charging the schools for building inspections and giving it back to them in service.

Commissioner Shank asked about funding for the Pitt Community College parking lot? Mr. Robinson said there are no funds included for the parking lot. He suggested the Community College sell some property that they have to raise the funds for the parking lot. Chairman James said he was hoping for funding from the State that will help the Community College.

Chairman James asked about the Woodridge Sewer project. Ms. Bryan said that very little has been received in acreage fees at this time. Mr. Robinson said that this project is just getting started so there has not been time for the receipts to come back to the County. Chairman James said he is concerned about that project.

Commissioner Owens stated the following:

1. Good to know the growth in property taxes and payments in lieu of taxes
2. Manager presented an overall increase of 4% in the budget for the coming year
3. Would like the Manager to increase
 - additional staff for Sheriff for courthouse security
 - rescue squad funding by changing the inequity in funding between squads
 - include some funds for classroom teachers' supplement

Commissioner Johnson **motioned** that the monies to the rescue squad all be equal. Commissioner Owens seconded the motion. Mr. Joyner reminded the Board that Greenville would need to be included. Commissioner Hammond said they chose to create rescue districts and there will be an inequity until the whole county is included. He said that this needs to be done uniformly.

Mr. Robinson said that the State has recommended to reactivate the EMS Council and ask them how to add paid personnel to supplement the rescue squads and how to pay for those paid personnel. He stated that the County can increase revenue by charging fees for service or by a uniform tax throughout the County. Commissioner Hammond said these fees are collectible. This Board needs to address this effort and it is time for there to be paid personnel. Chairman James said the structure which the City of Greenville has established is the only way to assure collection of the funds.

Commissioner Johnson said that the Board will need a full discussion on emergency services. The motion proposed was based on the change proposed by staff on funding of rescue squads. He said the funding should be fair and equitable.

Chairman James called for the vote. The motion passed eight to one with Commissioner Hammond opposed to the motion.

Commissioner Owens **motioned** for the Manager to add to the budget the cost of funding the classroom teacher supplements by adding one and a half percent increase. Commissioner Hammond seconded the motion. Commissioner Johnson asked if this can be done within the current tax rate.

Commissioner Bowen stated that there are 1414 classroom teachers in Pitt County with an average salary of \$25,500. He stated that with the one and a half percent supplement, it would cost the County approximately \$530,250. He stated that if the Board includes the thirty-four Assistant Principals, the figure would be about \$543,000.

Commissioner Bowen stated that the Board of Commissioners is providing the funds to the schools and they need to express what they want it spent on, which is the teachers' supplements and supplement to Assistant Principals.

Commissioner Hammond said classroom teachers fared well this year with the State funding as well as last year. He said that the Governor has tried to bring their salaries up to the national average and they were given a 7 1/2% increase last year.

Commissioner Owens said teachers are the foundation of our society.

Commissioner Shank said the schools need more teachers to work with the students on levels one and two. Commissioner Bowen said that if the Board of Commissioners makes this request and the Board of Education does not provide the funding as stated, then the Board of Commissioners will take that into consideration when doing the budget the following year.

Commissioner Hammond said there are some other areas that need to be looked at with the schools, such as, other personnel and technology needs. Commissioner Bowen said nobody had contacted him asking for technology funds for the schools.

Commissioner Ward said there are about 40 teachers that are paid by local dollars. She said that once the budget is done, then the Board of Commissioners should say how they want the money allotted. She said that on the State level it is embarrassing that Pitt County teachers' supplements are so low.

Vice Chairman Savage asked about funding by function areas and that in his discussions with Dr. Sosne, that he was not opposed to this type of funding. Mr. Robinson stated that the Board could provide funding by functional areas but it still would not go down to the level of teacher supplements. Commissioner Owens asked the Manager to work the \$535,000 into the budget. Commissioner Bowen said that part of the funds proposed for the schools should be used for the purpose of funding teachers' supplements.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Bowen, seconded by Commissioner Hammond, the Board voted unanimously to amend Commissioner Owens motion to say that they want \$535,000 of the School funding to provided 1 ½% increase to 1414 classroom teachers supplements and add a one percent supplement for the 34 assistant principals with an approximate cost for assistant principals of \$13,000.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Owens, seconded by Commissioner Ward, for the Manager to bring back a funding proposal for the Sheriff's need for additional staffing for the Courthouse. Mr. Robinson said they have already over \$30,000 in the budget. Commissioner Johnson said this would not necessarily fund all the security measures needed. Sheriff Manning said with the new district court judge and security checkpoint added, he needs at least three people to man the checkpoint. He said that he currently does not have the flexibility to staff the security and needs extra part time money.

Sheriff Manning said he needed \$36,000 for two security officers and a third person to operate the machine.

Contracting for security officers was also discussed. Sheriff Manning maintained that he needs one or the other but preferred having part time funding because of the flexibility of scheduling the staff.

Commissioner Owens recommended that one more officer be added to the budget. Mr. Robinson said that instead of the position he could add part time money to the budget, such as \$30,000 for additional part time money for workers.

Vice Chairman Savage stated that all this added security is more than is needed.

Chairman James called for a vote on the motion. The vote was eight to one with Vice Chairman Savage opposed to the motion.

The Sheriff explained the bailiffs' duties that work in the courtrooms.

Vice Chairman Savage asked about the controlled access to the courthouse, and other security measures so why the need for more officers. One officer will be needed for the District Court Judge which is being added. Sheriff Manning said that he is switching from a reactive to pro-active approach.

Commissioner Shank addressed the arts and recreation. She said the Manager cut many of those items and she would like to readdress them and advocate that more money is put in each area.

Commissioner Hammond said that this Board led Keith Cooper to believe that if he came back during the budget session that the Board would consider funding "Walk for the Hungry."

Commissioner Shank motioned to fund as follows:

PC Arts Council - 7,000
Winterville-Ange Museum - \$3,000
Farmville Arts - 7,000
Ayden Arts - 7,000
Libraries should not be cut back
Farmville Library - \$5,000
Grifton Library - \$5,000
Grifton Rec. - \$2,000
Grifton Civic Center - \$5,000

Jackie Robinson League - \$5,000

Commissioner Hammond seconded the motion.

Mr. Robinson added a facility back in for Community Schools. He noted that the Community Schools program funds the whole County's recreation.

Commissioner Hammond said he wanted to add the funding for the Jackie Robinson League back in the budget.

Commissioner Ward stated that the way it is configured there is some equity between funding in the communities.

Chairman James called for a vote on the motion. The vote was eight to one with Chairman James opposed.

Commissioner Shank said that the top priority is education and the Board should not have accepted the Manager's recommendation for school funding and hoped for a more positive outcome. Vice Chairman Savage said that we want higher test scores and the commissioners cannot be blamed for unreasonable lunch hours in some of the schools.

There was additional discussion about funding for education.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Owens, Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board