

**Pitt County Board of Commissioners
Greenville, North Carolina**

Emergency Called Meeting

**September 24, 1999
1:00 P.M.**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session meeting on Monday, September 13, 1999, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, Greenville, North Carolina with all 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 T. Bryan, Director of Financial Services

Call to Order and Welcome by Chairman James.

Prayer by Commissioner Savage.

Pledge led by Commissioner Bowen.

Approval of Agenda

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Report on Hurricane Floyd

Mr. Robinson reported that Bobby Joyner has been responsible for coordination of all the activities from the Emergency Operations Center. He reported that there were over 2000 rescues of people due to the rising waters from Hurricane Floyd. He stated that the Sheriff's manpower was used for rescue, as well as, the National Guard, Coast Guard, Marines, and many individuals were working to help. He stated that the County was responsible for food and water, shelters, and supplies for the citizens. He said the Red Cross has now taken over the food responsibility and is providing meals and assistance to people in shelters and thousands of others who were without food and water. He expressed his appreciation to all individuals who assisted in helping to rescue citizens that were flooded.

Mr. Bobby Joyner, Emergency Management Coordinator, commented that volunteers have come from everywhere. He stated that when Greenville Utilities Commission lost the water plant, they had volunteer firemen hauling water. He stated that there were ten Fire Departments, the State Emergency Recovery Team members(SERT), and many individuals helping with search and rescue from throughout the State and locally. He said he had several teams that were on the waiting list. Everyone has been good about helping where needed.

Mr. Glenn Cutrell, Interim Tax Assessor, said that there was damage north and south of the Tar River in rural areas and within city limits. He reported a preliminary estimate of \$2.7 million in damage in the Town of Grifton. He reported that south of First Street in Greenville there was a preliminary estimate of \$7 million in damage. He stated that they have not been able to get to north of the river to inspect it so he had no preliminary estimates. Mr. Robinson stated that 30 inches of rain has caused a massive amount of damage. Mr. Cutrell also stated that he did not have any damage figures from infrastructure within the towns. Mr. Robinson commented that the Governor's Office will get the first run of figures on Monday. Mr. Robinson said that this flood was more like a 500 year flood.

Mr. Rhodes said the municipalities have damage and they will take their staff out and do inspections this afternoon. They have looked at the one hundred year flood plain. Over 2,000 structures in the one hundred year flood plain and in extended area have damage. South of Highway 33 and Highway 264 north of the river, there is an estimate that some 4,000 structures were damaged or flooded. Substantial numbers of mobile home parks in the Old River Road area were under water. The Clarks Neck Road area in the eastern tip of the county subdivisions were damaged. He stated that these were very preliminary numbers. He stated that their next job was to work on the temporarily housing sites with the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). He said they are ready to help set up the sites.

Mr. Robinson said that it is the Department of Social Services' responsibility to initially staff the shelters and get them open. Mr. Garrison opened the shelters, staffed with Social Services staff and they operated the shelters until Tuesday of this week. The local Red Cross and Salvation Army have been feeding people in those shelters since they took over the shelters.

Mr. Ed Garrison, DSS Director explained that after housing and caring of the people in the shelters then staff started working on the recovery. There were teams of employees in the shelters. There was an office on the other side of the river and supply teams sent to work in the northern part of the County and two emergency satellites for the temporary feeding assistance program. Mr. Garrison discussed the electronic benefit transfer program used for food stamps. He said federal regulations for this disaster have been slightly modified and he provided the Board with copies of the rules.

He stated that they are taking applications, processing, keying into the State Food Stamp Information Network which will cause a benefit card to be sent out for the applicants. They can take the card to any grocery store and buy food with it. If currently on food stamps, they will receive full benefits without applying and will also be able to receive their October and November benefits. Mr. Garrison commended his staff for what they've been through and what they have been able to do for the citizens of Pitt County.

Mr. Garrison presented a Budget Amendment for the Federal money and stated that some of the regulations have not been significantly relaxed. He said they are helping people with their emergency needs as much as possible. He also informed the Board that he will probably ask for more County money in the future and will continue asking in order to meet the needs. He stated that he has served the County for 20 years and is responsible to help the citizens of Pitt County. He thanked the Board for their assistance.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to approve the immediately transfer of these funds according to the budget amendment as approved.

165476-540000	Emergency Assistance	\$150,000
165476-540001	Participation Expense	\$150,000
162400-423000	Social Services Administration	\$300,000

Commissioner Savage asked about how they were relaxing food stamps requirements. Mr. Garrison responded that the amount of income is atrociously low..

Mr. George Perry stated that the general assistance program is total county money. The maximum amount is \$100 and is tied to the calendar year. All benefits are tied to a test. He stated that they are using the Salvation Army and other county resources but are trying to do everything in-house. Mr. Perry stated that they operate a summer and winter benefit program that has a maximum benefit of \$200 for gas or fuel oil for homes as well as utilities, fans, etc. He said there are federal funds for utilities. Mr. Perry explained that the Emergency Assistance Program is tied to people who have children under 21 with a \$300 maximum for rent and utilities. The Carolina Access Program is tied to a resource test as well as income test. If the individual is sixty years old or above, the maximum an individual can have in a savings account is \$3,000. If the individual is under sixty years old, the resources test is \$2,000. If the individual meets that part, then they look at their income. He stated that they were looking at individual costs for the disaster and then net income. He stated that they have reviewed income levels and think they will be able to provide a lot of assistance. Mr. Perry said that over 2000 food stamp were requested yesterday and over 60 individuals received help with utilities. He stated that the have mobilized all their staff and will have the offices open Saturday and Sunday.

Chairman James asked about the local donations account which has been set up for disaster victims and how it would be administered. He stated that all contributions for this cause were tax deductible and 100% will be used to assist flooding victims. He stated that the Finance Department would make wise use of this money to help those in need.

Mr. Robinson stated that there are no strings attached to the donations and the fund is called "The Pitt County Hurricane Floyd Disaster Relief Fund."

Mr. Robinson said that they have found two sites in the County and have entered into contracts with FEMA on the County Home site for temporary housing. He stated that the individuals must first apply through FEMA. They cannot secure a unit through the County, they must start with FEMA. Mr. Robinson said that there is a site in Grifton which will accommodate over 100 units. Around 200 units may be placed on the County home site. He reported that FEMA had said they would allow people to put trailers on their own properties if they had an existing trailer which flooded. In addition, they will put people in hotel spaces but it will have to go through FEMA.

Mr. Robinson reported that they have established teams to go back into the flooded areas. The teams will be looking at gas lines, electrical service, roads, and other dangers. The Sweep Team started in the Grifton area. The Animal Team will deal with dead carcasses. The Hog and Chicken industries were taking care of their own. A unit has been put together to do investigation on deaths to help identify victims of the flood. Mr. Robinson said that they have asked for assistance and will receive assistance. He reported that there is a temporary permit process for individual property owners to go back into their property but they need to have it inspected prior to entering their property. If the unit is safe, they may have temporary occupancy. If the unit is unsafe, the County will work with the homeowners to see if it can be repaired or if it needs to be condemned. The condemned trailers will be hauled off, then they will burn and destroy the units that are beyond repair. FEMA will contract with someone to come in

and do this service. Mr. Robinson provided the FEMA phone number for interested individuals. He stated that the Environmental Health officials will help the citizens.

Paul Andrews, Environmental Health Supervisor, stated that there were several teams working and that one team is working on guiding people on how to clean their homes. He stated that they are providing water supplies for chlorinating well water. They are still working on live animal rescues and the animals are being kept at the ECU Medical School with help from the Humane Society.

Chairman James expressed that the mobile units need to be put in the school districts where the children currently go to school. Chairman James stated that most of the needs are north of the river.

Mr. Joyner said that individuals who's homes were flooded need to call FEMA and put a note on the physical house where the occupants can be reached. The Highway Patrol is working with the County on road assessment.

Dr. John Morrow, Health Department Director, gave an update on public health since the start of this emergency situation. He stated that the Main Health Department was surrounded by water so his staff was operating out of the County Office Building and the old Health Department. Dr. Morrow reported that they are providing nursing services for the shelters. He stated that it has been important to have local nurses and that they worked them 24 hours or more a day. He reported that the State has provided some nurses and the National Red Cross is starting to assume some of that role.

Dr. Morrow reported that there were three official County shelters north of the river and four official County shelters south of the river. He stated that they are beginning to phase down the outreach programs. He thanked Pitt County Memorial Hospital and the ECU School of Medicine which had been very helpful through this crisis. Dr. Morrow said that there was a roving team of physicians. Free tetanus shots were being offered in many places including the general community and shelters. People going back into areas are likely to be injured. Dr. Morrow stated that they have managed to keep restaurants open as much as possible with the existing water problems. Health education staff has been working with Arlen Holt on getting safety information together to get out to the public. He stated that their other programs are getting back on schedule and temporarily working out of the School of Medicine. Once again, Dr. Morrow mentioned the risk of injury by going back into the standing water areas. He stated that drowning and electricution are the biggest risks and that is what the highest death rate had come from in other areas with this type disaster. He reminded people to be cautious of carbon monoxide fumes from generators. He asked that people not risk life or their well-being for sake of physical possessions.

Commissioner Ward said that all agencies that are supported by tax dollars have operated well. She said that she was proud that everyone came forward and moved forward during a trauma period. She said the County had a big hand in this and wants the citizens to realize what the County staff has done. She also stated that the donations that come into the Pitt County fund will be used solely for Pitt County citizens. Commissioner Shank noted that there would be no administrative cost involved with these funds.

It was suggested that the Pitt County Board of Commissioners determine who recieves these funds. Mr. Bobby Joyner said that the intentions were to handle this fund the same way it was handled during the tornadoes some years ago. The process was that the individuals put in an application and request with Social Services.

Commissioner Johnson motioned that the contributions be handled through applications put in at the Department of Social Services. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. Ms. Melonie Bryan suggested the Board set a limit on how much money could be given to an individual. Commissioner Bowen offered an amendment to the motion stating that the Finance Officer have the final authority on who receives the funds. Commissioner Savage seconded the amendment to the motion. Chairman James called for a vote on the amendment. The vote on the amendment was unanimous. Chairman James then called for a vote on the motion with the amendment. The vote was unanimous.

Proclamation amending Declaration of State of Emergency authorizing law enforcement to restrict access and movement of citizens within Pitt County on roads and waterways.

Mr. Joyner informed the Board that according to the County's Emergency Plan, the Chairman has the authority to sign and enact a "Proclamation amending restrictions in order to keep people off of the waterways and flooded areas. Vice Chairman Savage noted that this document does not need the concurrence of the Board but stated he was opposed to this amendment. He said he did not want law enforcement preventing people from returning to their property.

Commissioner Hammond said he wanted law enforcement to come down hard on people who were jet skiing for entertainment during this emergency.

Commissioner Shank said that this is proclamation is part of the plan and the safety of human lives is foremost in this situation.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Owens, seconded by Commissioner Shank, to adopt the proclamation amending restrictions

**AMENDMENT TO PROCLAMATION OF
A COUNTY STATE OF EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS the County of Pitt is under a Proclamation of a State of Emergency issued on September 15, 1999, which continues due to severe flooding within the County; and

WHEREAS Pitt County's Ordinance, Article II. State of Emergency, authorizes the Chairman to amend said Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, due to serious and dangerous conditions which endanger the welfare of our citizens and threaten further destruction of property make it necessary to amend and extend said State of Emergency for the safety of the public,

I hereby authorize the Sheriff of Pitt County and his designees to restrict the movement and access of the public to all designated areas of unincorporated Pitt County that are deemed unsafe for the public until such time as said designated areas have been declared safe for access by the public. These areas to be indicated by means of barricades, posted notices or orders to anyone in the area.

Furthermore, the Sheriff and his designees are hereby authorized to restrict all access to waterways within Pitt County.

Any municipality within Pitt County may authorize the enactment of these prohibitions and restrictions to be enforced by the Pitt County Sheriff and local law enforcement officers within their territorial jurisdiction

Any violators of these prohibitions or restrictions imposed by this Proclamation shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable upon conviction by a fine not to exceed \$50.00 or imprisonment not to exceed 30 days.

This Proclamation shall be effective immediately. Proclaimed this the 24th day of September, 1999, at 2:00 p.m..

PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST:

Eugene James
CHAIRMAN

JoAnne Burgdorff
WITNESS

Chairman James stated that he was removed from his home because of flooding and asked about getting back into his home. Commissioner Owens said the ordinance speaks to the public being in the water areas, not to an individual trying to get back to their home. Ms. Burgdorff said that the Sheriff needs the authority to restrict citizens who do not live in the flooded areas from going into those areas because of looting. Commissioner Hammond said that the law enforcement have already been restricting movement in those areas.

Mr. Joyner stated that if people go back in their homes and get injured then it could cause another emergency which the emergency workers do not need to have to deal with at this time.

Chairman James called for vote on the motion to amendment of emergency proclamation. The motion passed seven to two with Commissioners James and Savage opposed to the motion.

Commissioners' Comments

Vice Chairman Savage quoted that there were 1300 people in the shelters at this time but that was not a true number of people who have been displaced. He stated that the early assessment he had received from the Tax Assessor of damages was \$1.6 billion. (This figure later proved to be the total amount of property within the flooded area).

Vice Chairman Savage stated that the efforts should be trying to get families back together if they were separated and to get the students back into school and people back to work. He suggested that the Board should be concerned about regional efforts. He stated that there needs to be teams going out in the flooded areas offering mental health counselors and ministers need to be sent out. He asked if the inspections teams were condemning people's property versus making some efforts to alleviate actually condemning properties. He said he would like the government access channel used for getting information to the people and try to get the newspaper to the citizens north of the river. He asked when County employees could get back to work.

Commissioner Owens noted that Grifton was also hit very hard and that in Farmville areas, families moved into other homes with families and friends. He stated there needs to be an accumulation of all the information and facts about damages. People need money to restore the damage and the information needs to be gotten to the agencies that will assist with this recovery as quickly as possible.

Chairman James noted that there was sewage in some flooded areas. He expressed that the amendment to the emergency proclamation was not needed because the Board of Commissioners did not need to make rules that the citizens are going to have to break and that he was going back to his home and no one was going to stop him..

Commissioner Hammond commended the Pitt County staff and agencies for the sacrifices they have made and are making under these circumstances. He said that the employees are being impacted by the offices being closed because they are inaccessible. Mr. Robinson said he directed staff to pay the county employees as usual because the Board had instructed the Manager to follow State policies on employee time during inclement weather. He reported that the Governor's office sent a fax informing the counties that State employees would not be using their vacation during Hurricane Floyd. Mr. Robinson said that overtime will be paid and the County should be reimbursed by FEMA.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board