

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES FOR MAY 18, 2000**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session on Wednesday, May 18, 2000, at 8:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting is to consider public business as indicated on the following agenda.

Commissioners present:

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

Others present were:

Thomas B. Robinson, County Manager
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney
Susan J. Banks, Clerk to the Board
Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services
Arlen Holt, Public Information Officer

CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Gaskins

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

The Invocation was provided by Vice Chairman Hammond.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Johnson.

Chairman welcomed everyone in attendance.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner James, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as provided.

Mr. Robinson stated that the budget was balanced with interest earnings. He stated that the schools expenses have been included this year but next year some adjustments will need to be made to the budget. Commissioner James asked if staff had followed up on the piggybacking on the legislation for local option sales tax. He said all the money should be invested. Mr. Robinson stated the County Attorney is putting the legislative goals package together and it will be presented at the June 7th Legislative briefing. He stated that the plan is to invest all the funds possible if additional authorization can be received from the Legislature. Commissioner James said the Board should go to Raleigh and meet with each of the local legislators at some time.

Commissioner Shank asked when the Board was going to discuss the presentations that they have heard. Mr. Robinson stated that today's meeting may finish early and the Board could have some discussion time at the end of the meeting.

Commissioner Owens asked about the investing of funds and how much effect it has on the budget. Mr. Robinson stated that by having the additional authorization for investing funds, the County can absorb some of the additional expenses by using the interest earnings.

Social Services - Ed Garrison

Mr. Garrison stated that this year of the flood has been a difficult year for Social Services. He shared the mission statement of the Social Services Department. He reviewed the major accomplishments for the department and key objectives for the upcoming year.

	Dept. Request	Manager's Recommendation
NC Div. Of Social Services	\$124,080,929	\$118,279,394
County Budget	\$24,232,527	\$23,990,732
County Appropriation	\$10,320,497	\$10,039,909

Mr. Garrison stated he asked for three income maintenance caseworkers. He said Medicaid benefits requests are increasing because of the increase in the aging population. He said they are receiving more complaints and need more staff. Two additional social workers for weekend staff on-call services and Accounting Technician were requested.

The cost of the requested position is around \$30,000 and the County would be responsible for 48% of the cost.

Mr. Robinson said Social Services had requested six positions and he had not appropriated any new positions in his recommended budget. Mr. Garrison said they would double up on office space for additional staff, if necessary. The Board discussed the welfare program and cases and other related social services programs. The on-call social worker needs were discussed and space problems.

Mr. Robinson said that in the past few years the County has provided additional staff to meet the staffing needs in Social Services but this year is a slim year because of resources and space limitations. He stated that the need for additional space for Social Services was the main reason to build an Administration Building so they can expand within the County Office Building.

Chairman Gaskins called for a break at this time, 9:00 a.m.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT - Dr. John Morrow

Dr. Morrow reviewed the mission statement and the Health Department organization. He reviewed services performed and accomplishments during 1999-2000 of the Health Department.

Accomplishments for FY 1999-2000

- Assisted county in both acute & recovery stages of Hurricane Floyd disaster
- Implemented African American Diabetes Project to improve diagnosis and treatment of diabetes funded by PCMH Foundation
- Implemented regional "Start With Your Heart" grant
- Received continuation funding from the US Centers for Disease Control for alternative counseling and testing for HIV and other STD's
- Awarded grant funding through Smart Start to improve health of Pitt County preschoolers
- Secured grant funding from Kate B. Reynolds, The Duke Endowment, and Pitt Memorial Foundation to start a mobile preventive dental/medical service for Pitt County's indigent children

Challenges and Opportunities for 2000

- Addressing the needs of the growing number of uninsured
- Transition to ICD-9/CPT Coding for Medicaid and begin private insurance billing
- Maintaining clinical operations with static or decreased State funding support
- Increasing Role as Community Care Coordinator
- Emergency preparedness for natural disaster and bioterrorism

Dr. Morrow stated that these will be huge tasks for the Health Department because State and Federal funds are not increasing.

Proposed Budget	\$7,215,259
<u>Total Revenues</u>	\$7,215,259
State and Federal	1,938,190
Medicaid	790,951
County	2,697,858
Fees and Charges	279,350
Fund Balance	544,461
Other	964,269
<u>Expenditures</u>	
Salary and Fringe	5,229,435
Operating	1,623,081
Capital Outlay	362,743
<u>Changes in 99/00 Budget</u>	
Increased County request by	\$119,743
Decreased Total State/Federal funding (excluding Medicaid revenues)	37,692
Increase Medicaid Revenues	26,984
Increase Fees and Charges	9,680
Increase Grant Funds	675,048

Dr. Morrow spoke in detail about the mobile unit project which will go out into the county and meet the unmet needs of Pitt County children for dental and medical care. Mobile Unit Project was originated by Pitt Partner's Access to Care committee. It was funded by a Duke Endowment. The committee identified unmet need of Pitt County children for dental and medical care. The mobile unit will travel to areas where these needs have been identified. Medicaid children are not receiving their health care checks and this mobile unit could be used to address that issue.

Grant funding has been approved by:

- PCMH Foundation \$272,000
- The Duke Endowment \$180,000
- Kate B. Reynolds \$180,000

Commissioner Shank spoke in support of hiring a grant writer for the County. Mr. Robinson stated that a grant writer was needed for all departments. Commissioner Shank stated that this Board should decided to hire a grant writer. The decision by the Board was to hold this item until the Board discussed the final budget requests.

Mr. Robinson said that the State and Federal governments are backing away from Health and Mental Health services and funding of these programs.

Dr. Morrow stated that one person as a grant writer for all departments does not work well because they need to know a lot about the subject matter that they are writing about in a grant. Mr. Robinson stated that the Sheriff should have his own grant writer and then an additional grant writer for Human Services programs. Commissioner James suggested that there is probably someone on staff that can write these grant applications

Commissioner James said this program existed thirty years ago and there was no mobile unit. Commissioner Ward reviewed that this budget is three year start up and then the Medicaid and Healthchoice will pick up following the three years. She said that thirty years ago it was a referral service and they were then sent to a dentist. Commissioner Ward stated that the concern is that these children do not get to a dentist office and the medical screenings is an excellent benefit.

Commissioner Bowen asked how much money is collected on the sliding fee scale. Dr. Morrow stated that the collection rate is fairly good but they have identified some clients that abuse the system and that have the ability to pay but do not pay. Commissioner James stated a concern of the collection of fees. He said the Health Department should get 100% of collections since they are using a sliding fee scale.

PITT COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Joe Hunnicutt and Raymond Reddrick

Mr. Reddrick stated that Dr. Russell was not present due to the death of his father-in-law. He presented an economic impact study on funding for the community college. Mr. Hunnicutt said that the Manager's recommendation covers only the salary increases and increase in hospitalization costs. They asked for two additional positions and some other operating costs items. He presented a summary of the State's Community College plan for capital improvements with Pitt Community College getting approximately \$16 million for construction and approximately \$2 million for repair and renovation money. The monies are not interchangeable. The County must come up with matching dollars for the State bond funds, if the bond passes this fall. The bond package is in its third reading by the Legislature. He said they would like to schedule a meeting in the later part of July to discuss facility needs.

Vice Chairman Hammond asked what impact would there be if the State bond issue does not pass in the fall. Mr. Hunnicutt stated that they have some significant facility needs. The funds planned for the Leslie Building could be applied towards the local match. Mr. Hunnicutt said that they use the same specifications as the schools on mobile units but these units will be used as computer classrooms, which is the reason for the \$50,000 cost for each mobile unit. Commissioner James said \$500,000 for ten mobile units for too much and a waste of money. Mr. Hunnicutt said that \$6.285 million would be required in local match for the State bond funds and the \$2 million for the Leslie Building and the \$500,000 for mobile units would qualify for part of this local match. Mr. Robinson stated that since Pitt County is a low wealth county, there may be some break in this cost. Mr. Hunnicutt stated that they use the same formula for determining this as the public schools.

Mr. Hunnicutt stated that \$16 million will be available; of the \$16 million \$8.2 will be immediately available which leave \$7.9 million. The \$7 million can only be drawn down if the local match is appropriated. The Board and staff discussed this matter in detail and determined that further research would be necessary before allocations would be made.

Commissioner Shank asked what the College would do without the mobile units for the fall semester. Mr. Hunnicutt said they have already missed the timeframe for getting the mobile classrooms in for the fall and they would not be able to offer those classes.

Chairman Gaskins suggested the Board schedule a workshop to discuss the capital funding issue for the Community College. Mr. Hunnicutt suggested a late July workshop. Commissioner Ward said that mobile units are not temporary.

Mr. Robinson said that he did not include the mobile units in the budget. Mr. Hunnicutt said there is an immediate need for the mobile unit. Commissioner Bowen said he had been told that many classrooms are not being used. Mr. Hunnicutt invited Board members to come visit the campus during the fall and spring semesters and see for themselves that there is a need for the mobile units.

Chairman Gaskins called for a recess at 10:15 a.m.

Mr. Robinson recommended that the Board put in writing to the Legislature to review the methodology for determining Pitt County's local match using the low wealth county designation.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Vice Chairman Hammond, to follow the County Manager's recommendation to write a letter to the State Legislature to review the methodology for determining Pitt County's local match using the low wealth county designation.

COUNCIL ON AGING - Dr. Charles Byrd, Director

Dr. Byrd stated that his Board of Directors has been through his budget and has analyzed how they can meet their needs. He stated that the Manager's recommended budget does not meet their needs to serve 5,000 aging citizens per year without an additional appropriation. He stated that the Council on Aging's budget has been neglected for years. He said a token \$10,000 from the County will not get the job done. He expressed serious concern over the minimum funding they receive from the County. He stated that they are trying to get funds in the near future from other sources to build a Senior Center for this County. The Center will cost about \$3 million and then they will have an increase in the operating budget. He asked the Board for reconsideration of the Council on Aging budget. Dr. Byrd stated he keeps losing staff because of salaries.

Doug Jackson, Chairman of the Council on Aging Board, reviewed the expansion budget. The request was to upgrade salaries, add a social worker position and an increase in medical transportation. Mr. Doug Moore, Jim Alice and Mr. Whitfield, from Fountain, were present. Mr. Moore spoke about opening a Wellness Center in Fountain. He stated they have applied for and received a grant from the Pitt County Memorial Hospital Foundation. He said they purchased the old Beasley Drug Store building in downtown Fountain. They project opening in June but it may be delayed. He asked for support of the \$38,500 in the Council on Aging's budget for a satellite location in Fountain. Instead of operating Meals on Wheels out of town hall, they would be able to use the satellite office. Mr. Moore stated that twenty-three percent of Fountain's population is senior citizens.

Commissioner Owens spoke in support of the Fountain Wellness Center and stated that the men who presented this request are physically doing work on the center themselves. He stated that the aging people in Fountain can not drive to the senior center in Greenville. Commissioner Ward said there are other things that this center would be used for besides just the aging population. She stated that she would like to see the Board find a way to support it. Commissioner James said the people in Bethel have a senior citizens center and if support is given to Fountain, it should be given to all the senior centers in the County.

Commissioner Bowen asked how many people were in Fountain. There are 387 people in Fountain with 88 of them being senior citizens. Commissioner Owens asked if they have looked at locating a senior citizens center with the Intergenerational Center for Parks and Recreation. Commissioner Bowen reported that some of the Board members visited the facility

in Jacksonville and that two agencies were located in the same facility. Commissioner Huggins stated that the centers located in the communities would still remain in the communities.

Dr. Byrd said they need money to make an impact and they are currently moving inches at a time when they should be moving miles at a time.

EMERGENCY SERVICES - Bobby Joyner, Emergency Services Coordinator

Mr. Joyner stated that there was a radio communications system study done in 1996. At that time, the change in the system was cost prohibitive. They sought special legislation to increase flexibility in use of 911 fees to fund communications equipment. He stated that due to recent events such as Hurricane Floyd, chemical spill at Catalytica, and the train derailment, it has become apparent that a change needs to be made in the communications system. Several incidences were cited emphasizing the need for law enforcement, rescue, fire, emergency management, state agencies and other municipal agencies to be able to communicate with each other during crisis situations. Mr. Joyner recommended that a new system be purchased and it could be implemented in phases. He stated the decision needs to benefit the whole county and not just individual agencies. The cost of the proposed communications system is \$4 million with the cost being split 50/50 between 911 fees and general fund. Mr. Joyner reviewed the number of emergency calls received by agencies. He stated that this past year has proven that it is necessary for the County to be able to communicate with the State agencies during crisis. He said he needs to get the users back together and try to resolve the situation by moving forward with a modern up-to-date system. It can be done in phases but it needs to be done.

Justification for the new communications system is that some equipment is 32 years old and it can't be well maintained. Commissioner Ward asked if it would be phased in or would it be mandatory. Mr. Joyner said that the County could implement the system and other areas could add on. Mr. Joyner said the fire chiefs met and endorsed the concept. However, he also stated that the Fire Association has not fully supported it. Mr. Joyner said that if the volunteer fire departments did not want the new 800 trunking system. Mr. Joyner explained that during the flood and the Catalytica incident, there was no communication between highway patrol, Sheriff's department, city police and others. He said the highway patrol is looking at a new system. Mr. Joyner said that communications is the key and that everyone could communicate in the emergency services and law enforcement. Sheriff Manning and Nate Caddy, 911 Coordinator, both spoke in favor of the new system. Sheriff Manning gave examples of situations where the communications were needed in crisis situations. The incident command system and the proposed 800 trunking system would work together. The different groups can be put on separate talk groups. Sheriff Manning stated that many times the deputies jobs carry them across county lines and they need to be able to communicate. Mr. Robinson said that the current system does not allow the deputies to have private radio frequencies. Commissioner Shank said that the Board needs to support this and asked if this system is compatible with the Hospital. Sheriff Manning said his concern is to be compatible with the statewide network. Mr. Joyner said that this system would be compatible. Commissioner Ward spoke in support of funding the full \$4 million. Commissioner Bowen asked how many rescue volunteers there are in the County. Mr. Joyner reported there were 1200 rescue volunteers. Commissioner Bowen said he understood that the volunteer Fire Association voted unanimously not to support this system. Mr. Joyner said that there are radios in use that you can not even buy parts for maintenance.

Commissioner James asked what was wrong with the current system. Mr. Nate Caddy stated that they are having equipment failures. He said that they have continued to patch equipment and continued to do whatever they could do to keep this 1952 technology running. He said eleven years ago they had one-third of the numbers of calls that they currently have now. He said they need to provide the best response they can to the public. The Sheriff cannot talk to the rescue squad or the firemen. The problem is coordinating what we currently have in resources and the system can no longer be patched. Mr. Caddy gave an example where one person tied up the 911 system for fifty-two minutes and no one could talk on the current system.

Mr. Joyner reported on the EMS Study Committee and they recommended that the County appropriate \$31,500 for emergency services. They have asked for the Board to put a .05 cent tax increase for funds to go to rescue. He said that there are not enough volunteers working during the daytime. There is inequity in services countywide. Funding is not consistent from one department to another. He stated there needs to be continued study with the committee and they need to go to the State. If the State cannot do the study, then the County needs to hire a consultant to study the needs and report back to this Board by January 1. He said that the committee has not been able to develop long range recommendations. Mr. Robinson said the County cannot afford to put paid personnel in all of the rescue squads and there will need to be some decisions made in the next few months.

Mr. Joyner requested three employees in his budget. He said he is very understaffed. The Manager has included one new employee in the Emergency Services budget.

Commissioner Owens expressed concerns about the volunteers. Mr. Robinson said the Board has to move forward and make some progress in the area of rescue and possibly fire services.

Commissioner Bowen stated that Virgil O'Neal, volunteer Belvoir fireman, was present and asked if he could speak. It was a consensus to allow Mr. O'Neal to speak. Mr. O'Neal said that the volunteers agreed that a new radio system is needed but they are concerned about the system being selected as well as how it will be funded. Mr. O'Neal said he had thirteen walkie talkies in service and eight radios in trucks but the County is talking about allocating only three radios per fire department. Mr. O'Neal said the Fire Association did not vote in favor of this system.

Vice Chairman Hammond said he board should not be held hostage by a few departments.

Mr. Robinson said that the Board needs at least an hour to review and give him direction. The Board decided to discuss items and draw conclusions at the next meeting.

UPON MOTION by Vice Chairman Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to recess the meeting until Friday, May 18, 2000, at 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board