

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES FOR MAY 19, 2000**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session on Friday, May 19, 2000, at 8:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Greenville, North Carolina.

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**

Mr. Robinson stated that today's meeting was to hear from some of the department heads and outside agencies that have requested an audience with the Board concerning the 2000/2001 budget.

**Sheriff's Department - Sheriff Manning**

The Sheriff stated his support of the pay plan study and spoke on how he loses employees to other law enforcement departments because of salaries.

Sheriff Manning stated he had requested an additional \$50,000 for the Emergency Response Team. They need some special equipment before he can put the team into action. He stated he also needs additional personnel such as a clerk so the deputy that is doing work in the office can be put out as a road deputy. A grant for a position has been applied for and he hopes they will receive the grant. He stated that they need additional telecommunicators to keep emergency operations properly staffed. He said the existing communicators need some relief and that they are building up a lot of compensatory time. Total cost for additional personnel is over \$32,000.

Sheriff Manning requested additional space and stated the need for alarms for storage areas where equipment and evidence are stored. He stated that there has been a diving team on staff but they have no boat to use for their operations of search and recovery or to assist with evacuations. Ten bar lights on deputy cars need to be replaced. About \$27,000 of needs are not funded in the Manager's Recommended Budget. He stated he needs a replacement van for transfer of jail prisoners.

The Sheriff stated that he has gotten equipment from as many other resources as he could find available. Commissioner Shank asked about patrol deputies for north of the river.

Sheriff Manning stated that north of the river there are three deputy zones. He stated this area is as covered as any other area. Commissioner James spoke about the deputies putting gas in their cars and asked about the difference in salaries of deputies as Resource Officers in the schools versus regular road deputies. Mr. Tim Copeland explained to Commissioner James how this process happened and stated that the Resource Officer position requires some specialized training. Sheriff Manning stated that he had an upgrade of deputies to Master Deputy pay grade for experienced officers so they will be paid as well as the school deputies. Commissioner Ward stated that the Sheriff is asking for entry level deputy positions so their pay plan would be lower than Resource Officers because of the experience that is required. The Board discussed the School Recourse Officers. Commissioner Bowen asked why the department needs a boat. Sheriff Manning said that whenever there is a drowning or a need to search the bottom of the water for weapons they need proper equipment which they do not have access to at this present time.

Commissioner Bowen asked about the cost of a gun being \$1200 which he said can be bought for \$600. Ward Parker stated that the Response Team provided him with the gun prices. Commissioner Huggins asked about the law enforcement coverage north of the river. Sheriff Manning stated that it would be beneficial to the County, if the deputies did not have to provide transportation for mental patients. Commissioner Ward restated that the job of the Clerk Typist IV is currently being done by a deputy in the Sheriff's Department. Commissioner Ward asked for the total amount of money for the priorities today. Sheriff Manning stated it would be around \$125,000 to meet his budget request above what the Manager recommended.

Chairman Gaskins called for a short break at 8:45 a.m.

#### **Engineering, Inspections, Solid Waste - Phil Dickerson**

Mr. Dickerson said that supplies have increased significantly because they are providing materials for the new staff in Engineering.

#### **Buildings and Grounds - Phil Dickerson**

Mr. Dickerson stated there was \$100,000 increase in the Buildings and Grounds budget for the estimate on the work on the Humber House. Mr. Robinson reported on the process for the improvements on the Humber House. Mr. Robinson suggested that the Humber House be turned back over to the State since it houses the North Carolina Division of Archives. Mr. Dickerson stated that since the basement flooded during the Hurricane Floyd some FEMA funds will be available for the work in the basement. Vice Chairman Hammond said the staff in the house have let it deteriorate. Mr. Dickerson said nothing had been done to the house for two or three years.

In the Building and Maintenance budgets, Mr. Dickerson stated that he will not have any extra funds for any special projects. He said he can make the recommended budget work as long as if the Board makes any changes, then they will fund the projects. He said he had requested a position but it may be funded through other sources.

#### **Inspections – Phil Dickerson**

Mr. Dickerson said they are spending a lot of money on cellular phones since the flood in order to make the Inspectors available to the citizens. Commissioner James asked if the cellular phone package can be changed to unlimited time. Mr. Dickerson said he would look into the package.

Commissioner James asked what can be done about the trailers on Mumford Road. Mr. Dickerson said these mobile homes are in the City's jurisdiction and the City is pursuing the legal process for destroying the trailers when the owner cannot be located. Mr. Dickerson said the

County is ready to take them down once the City has completed the legal aspects of this process. Vice Chairman Hammond said he had been contacted by citizens complaining about this trailer park and that it has become a health hazard with mosquitoes, flies, etc. Commissioner Shank asked Mr. Dickerson to contact the City and explained the Board's concern about this trailer park. Mr. Dickerson stated he had done that previously but would follow up on this matter.

#### **Solid Waste – Phil Dickerson**

Mr. Dickerson said that they have been working to get areas where people have dumped waste cleaned up by using Deputy Steve Cannon to locate the offenders. Mr. Dickerson said that he was requesting a Recycling Coordinator position and also needs funds to replace some equipment. He is recommending a \$1.00 increase in tipping fees and \$4.00 in household fees. Joel Scales stated that household fees would go from \$58 to \$62 per year. Commissioner James stated that solid waste has held their budget down and he was supportive of Mr. Dickerson's recommendation. He suggested that more education about recycling at the container sites would be helpful. Mr. Dickerson said that Pitt County is second in the State for trash diversion, following behind Craven County. Commissioner Owens asked if there was anything that he asked for that the Manager did not recommend. Mr. Dickerson said that the position he requested in Buildings and Grounds was not funded but he could operate without it if he had to.

Mr. Robinson stated the meeting was ahead of schedule and the Board could use this time to discuss items that they have already heard.

Mr. Robinson discussed the funding that was budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan. He stated they could pay for the mobile units at Pitt Community College by spreading out the costs. He stated to fund the communications equipment, it would be necessary to raise the E-911 fee by fifty cents and finance the equipment over an eight-year period. He said the budget would be fine for this year but there will be a shortfall of about \$550,000 in the next year which is approximately one-cent on the tax rate.

Mr. Robinson explained the long term debt schedule. Commissioner James said there will be a problem in 2003-2004 year. Mr. Robinson said the County is in the fifth year of an 8 year cycle. In the next 2-3 years the tax rate will need to be increase .02 to .03 cents to cover debt and that the items included are well within reach if the Board chooses to move forward.

Ms. Bryan said the debt load for this County is very low for a county the size of Pitt County. She said however, that if the County does not keep the infrastructure at a reasonable level and support growth, then the rating agencies will be alarmed. She said the County needs to continue to move forward. Vice Chairman Hammond said he wants to hold the line with no new tax increases.

Commissioner Shank said she thought this Board voted for the recreation concept to be in the budget. Commissioner Ward spoke in support of a grant writer. Commissioner James said he was supportive of community schools and they need to have a permanent headquarters. Commissioner James stated that the Board should cut back on some of these priorities. He said if the 800 trunking is budgeted then something else will have to wait.

Ms. Bryan stated that the courthouse construction is running a year behind schedule, these funds can be used for 800 trunking this coming year but there will be a need to fund it the next year. Vice Chairman Hammond said the rural fire departments are not supportive of the radio communications system. Commissioner Bowen said the rescue squads did not want it either. Commissioner Shank said that the staff made a recommendation and they have studied the matter thoroughly. Board members discussed further the radio system. Commissioner Owens suggested that there should be some consensus with the volunteers.

Commissioner Owens stated that \$775,000 requested for the Intergenerational Center and Park and the \$500,000 requested by Pitt Community College needs to wait until a later date. He said he had concerns about the plan for an Intergenerational Park because the County should not divert from community schools program. Commissioner Bowen said he did not have a problem with budgeting for a radio system but he was not necessarily sold on the idea of the 800 trunking system.

Commissioner Ward suggested the Board hear the next item and hold off on making any motions.

#### **Mental Health – Debra Dihoff**

Ms. Debra Dihoff recognized David White and other board members from Mental Health that were present. She presented figures on active caseloads:

Services provided:

1998 – 3,280

1999 – 3,395

2000 - 3,144 (for 10 months)

Ms. Dihoff provided some customer survey results that reflected very positive responses.

She stated they have implemented a new software program and have worked out some of the problems. She stated that they have resolved a negative fund balance with the help of the County Finance Office, won some awards on Employee Assistance Program and centralized medical records. They are planning constant improvements. They are looking into national accreditation as a possibility. She said they are not asking for an increase in their budget this year. She said that the State needs to come in with more money for Mental Health and they will also increase their collections on patient accounts. Ms. Dihoff commented on the following items:

- need additional staff and nursing coverage for 10 detox beds in a 24 hour, 365 day program
- need additional case managers
- need increased accessibility and improved transportation in rural areas
- need additional support staff
- need more access on new computer systems and telephone system upgrades

#### **Budget Highlights:**

- No increase in county funds
- would like to keep a 15% fund balance and have an opportunity to rebuild; did not use fund balance for the budget this year
- 3 New Staff Positions
- Replacement of 10 Department Vehicles
- Budget Decrease of 7%
- Thomas S Diversion to ECU
- Thomas S/Willie M Anticipated Funding Cuts
- Conservative 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Party Revenue Estimates
- Willie M Program Changes (Phoenix House) - no staff effected

Commissioner James said the County needs to send a resolution to Raleigh requesting that funds not be cut when the program is mandated by the State. He asked if money was being lost on the Detox Center's operations. Ms. Dihoff stated that they are over \$60,000 in the black at the end of this year.

Commissioner Bowen asked about the survey that Mental Health performed and discussed the deputies that have to transport commitments. Ms. Dihoff said that the law said it was the Sheriff's responsibility but she would check into it. She stated that she would research and follow up with the Manager. Commissioner Ward commended the Mental Health Board, Mental Health Director, Mental Health Finance Officer and the County's Finance Officer for the new budget and the progress that they have made over this past year. Commissioner Shank requested that Ms. Dihoff report back to the Board in a couple of months with an ongoing report.

Mr. Duane Holder, Mental Health Finance Director, reviewed the budget. He provided a comparison of County dollars to the Mental Health Center's budget. He thanked the Board, County Finance Officer and especially the staff and said he looked forward to a slow and solid growth. Commissioner Bowen asked about the overhead in the group homes. Commissioner Ward questioned Mr. Holder about their use of contractors in providing services. Mr. Robinson said that anyone associated with this turnaround on this budget should be commended. He said he would like to see the fund balance not used each year at Mental Health but for them have enough in funds not to need to come back to the County. Commissioner Bowen said he would like to see the same thing done at Mental Health that is being done with the Education Compact. Chairman Gaskins praised Ms. Bryan for her work on getting the Mental Health Center straightened out. Vice Chairman Hammond asked about unfunded mandates. Ms. Dihoff stated that they do keep getting unfunded mandates from the State. She reported that she plans to re-institute reports to the Board on vacant positions at Mental Health.

Chairman Gaskins called for a short break at 10:30 a.m.

#### **Outside Agencies -**

##### **Pitt County Arts Council - Bruce Wackelin**

Mr. Wackelin informed the Board that they are now located in Ayden. He said they asked for \$10,000 and the Manager recommended \$7,000. He stated he was happy to have received the \$7,000 and thanked the Board for the appropriation. He stated they would be good stewards of the funds. He said they are trying to capture the spirit of Pitt County and North Carolina in the past and now.

Mr. Robinson stated that Dan LaRue was present and would like to address the Board concerning his budget.

Vice Chairman Hammond motioned, seconded by Commissioner James, to allow Dan LaRue, ECVC to speak the Board on his budget requests. The motion passed unanimously.

##### **East Carolina Vocational Center - Dan LaRue**

Mr. LaRue spoke briefly about the flood and its effects on ECVC. He stated they had received \$10,000 in the recommended budget but he would like to request \$5,000 in additional funding. He said they work through Mental Health Association and provide services for ADAP clients. The State dictates what they provide to the clients and they only fund 75% of the service. Mental Health reduced their funding by \$114,000 for their services. He said they are also being cut by vocational rehabilitation. He said they are having a difficult time being competitive. He reported on services that they provided without any reimbursement over the last year. He spoke about the partnership with Pitt County. He reported on past agreements with Mental Health and how they have helped save the County money by providing services. He said they were promised \$100,000 for a building but only received \$50,000 and they supplied the rest. Commissioner Bowen spoke on how proud he is of the ECVC operations. Mr. LaRue said they have to go hire temporaries because they can not get enough disabled people to work at their facility. He said they have to turn recycling away because they can not staff the operation.

Commissioner Shank stated that there may be other circumstances that surround these people that prevent them from working and the Board needs to understand the whole picture. Transportation is a big problem and other salaries may cause problems with some individuals benefits.

### **Grifton Library - Paul Spruill**

Mr. Spruill said the Manager funded the capital requests for the Grifton Library. They submitted a \$5,000 match for the Perkins Trust grant for the baseball facility. It is a capital project with a multiple year project. He thanked the Board for their funding this year.

Commissioner Shank recommended the Board start with reviewing the operating budget. Commissioner Owens asked what the total budget amount was and Mr. Robinson responded that the total recommended budget was \$180 million.

Commissioner Owens motioned to add to the Manager's recommended budget; the Social Services position for \$30,000, Grantwriter for \$55,000, add an additional \$50,000 to the Sheriff's overall budget, and to increase the Eastern Carolina Vocational Center's budget by \$5,000.

Commissioner Owens said the Board should hold the mobile units at Pitt Community College and the Intergenerational Center. In addition, he stated that the Emergency Services 800 trunking request should be worked in at a later date.

Commissioner James seconded the motion on the budget by Commissioner Owens.

Commissioner Ward asked about the radio trunking system. She said it should be set up and let the people come on board as they want to come on board. The Sheriff and the fire chiefs were interested. She said she does not want to keep an old system just for a few people.

Commissioner Ward asked about the five-year financial plan for the Intergenerational Center. She said she was speaking to just the office area for community schools and asked where the County stood with the offices for Community Schools. Mr. Robinson said Ms. Keene could work to find funding for the park and that it could be financed over an eight-year period. The initial intent was a home for the Community Schools Staff and office and to consider the High School site as a potential location. He said it sounds like the Board members concerns are the large park and he did not want the park concept to hold up the offices.

Vice Chairman Hammond asked about the proposed increase in fees. Mr. Robinson said the Board does not need to raise the communication fees now but the solid waste needs to be raised now because the revenue has been projected.

Commissioner Shank read the motion from the April 17<sup>th</sup> minutes about the Intergenerational Park. Mr. Robinson said he understood that the Board wants him to move forward on the facility for the Community Schools offices. Commissioner Shank spoke in support of the mobile units at Pitt Community College because they will have to turn away students. Commissioner Owens said he needed more information and he did not support funding of the mobile units. Commissioner Shank said she agreed but would like to meet with Pitt Community College Board of Trustees as soon as possible.

Chairman Gaskins called for a vote on the motion by Commissioner Owens. The motion passed unanimously.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Shank, for the Manager to pursue with Alice Keene other funding sources such as grants for the building for Community Schools. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Mr. Dickerson stated his request to increase tipping fees was for \$1.00 for solid waste; \$4.00 for household fees for residential waste. He explained the logic for the increase.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Shank, seconded by Commissioner Ward, to appropriate these fees in order to keep up with expenses as presented in the Manager's recommended budget

***FEE INCREASES***  
**(Proposed and Incorporated in Revenue Assumptions)**

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	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Emergency Services</b>		
Aged/Rest/Group Home Permit	\$ 50	\$ 60
Day Care Home/Center Permit	50	60
Fire Inspections	50	60
Minimum 5,000 Sq. Ft.	10	15
Each Additional 5,000 Sq. Ft.	2	5
Fire Reports	25	35
Foster Home Permit	50	60
Fumigation & Thermal Insecticide Fogging (1-Year Permit)	50	60
Range Hood	50	60
Tank Removal/Installation – Combustible Products	50	60
 <b>Solid Waste</b>		
Tipping Fees <i>Per Ton</i>	\$ 44	\$ 45
Household Fees <i>Annual</i>	58	62

Ms. Bryan explained the need to keep the \$2.0 million in the solid waste fund because of post closure costs on the landfill. There is a post closure requirement and this would be an audit exception if the money is spent from that fund. Mr. Dickerson explained the individual needs for these fees.

Commissioner Bowen spoke about the increase in fire inspection fees.

The Board voted seven to two to increase fees as proposed in the Manager's recommended budget. Commissioner Bowen and Vice Chairman Hammond opposed the motion.

Commissioner Shank asked Mr. Robinson to review the items in the Capital Improvement Plans for the public's benefit. Mr. Robinson reviewed the Capital Improvement projects that were budgeted.

Mr. Robinson stated that his understanding on the 800 trunking was that he is supposed to get the fire departments and rescue squads, as well as the municipalities, and come to some conclusion as to what the needs are and return to the Board with a recommendation before the end of this calendar year. He stated he understood that the increase in the E-911 fees were to

be included in the budget. The consensus of the Board was that no motion was needed on this matter at this time. Commissioner James said that the 911 fees need to be put into place.

Commissioner James said that with the Education Compact, they are putting the classroom teachers under a great deal of pressure. He said that the children need to be taught the right attitude and then they will be succeed in life. Commissioner Ward said that these goals were derived from State guidelines and were not goals set by the County Commissioners or the local School Board. No goals have been set up for any teacher to achieve anything that is not established by the State of North Carolina.

Mr. Robinson informed the Board that the local National Guard Unit has a representative present who would like to address the Board. Mr. Robinson stated that he had cut their allocation. Sgt. First Class Spencer, 514<sup>th</sup> Company, stated that the County has supported the local National Guard with funding in the past. She said the Armory was flooded last year and they have not been able to generate any funds from rental of space at the Armory since the flood. She said the State and Federal funds cannot be used for some of the things that they need to purchase. The money they received in advance of the flood had to be reimbursed. They have nothing. She gave examples of how the local National Guard has assisted the County.

Vice Chairman Hammond motioned, seconded by Commissioner Owens, to give \$1000 to the local National Guard. Commissioner James asked if they received payment for their services and Sgt. Spencer responded that they do receive payment.

Commissioner Bowen offered a substitute motion to delay action on this matter until a later date. Commissioner Shank asked for more information on their budget.

Vice Chairman Hammond and Commissioner Owens withdrew the motion to fund the National Guard.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Owens, seconded by Commissioner James, to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Shank said the Manager had done a good job and thanked the Board. Mr. Robinson thanked the Departments and have timelines on the budget projects. He thanked Loretta Lewellyn and Melonie Bryan.

The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC  
Clerk to the Board