

PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

FEBRUARY 23, 2001

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop session on Friday, February 23, 2001, at 8:30 a.m. in the Emergency Operations Center, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina. The purpose of the meeting was to consider public business.

David Hammond, Chairman (arrived later)
Glenn Bowen, Vice Chairman
Eugene James, Commissioner
Thomas H. Johnson, Commissioner
Mark W. Owens, Jr., Commissioner
Randy Royal, Commissioner
M. Theresa Shank, Commissioner
Beth B. Ward, Commissioner

Absent:

Tom Coulson, Commissioner

Staff present were:

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

Call to order by Vice Chairman Bowen.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner James offered the prayer.

Commissioner Shank led in the pledge of allegiance

Commissioner Owens motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner James seconded the motion. Mr. Robinson stated a closed session for economic development needed to be added first on the agenda.

Commissioner James motioned to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Royal seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

Vice Chairman Bowen asked the County Attorney to read the General Statutes giving the Board the authority to go into closed session.

Ms. Burgdorff cited the following General Statutes for closed session:

- (4) expand industries
- (5) instruct staff on contract for real property

UPON MOTION by Commissioner James, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to go into closed session for the purposes stated by the County Attorney.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner Shank, seconded by Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to return to open session.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Mr. Robinson stated that he has discussed the withholding by the State of the Inventory Tax Reimbursement and the Medicaid deficit in the County with all the agencies and asked that they conserve their budgets and find a way to cut back on the spending. He said he has asked the agencies that receive County funding to cut back by their respective proportion of the budget cuts.

Commissioner James asked about the Detention Center and the daily income from housing federal inmates. He figured that the jail is making \$1500 a day on housing federal inmates. Mr. Robinson said they are housing around 90 prisoners a day. Commissioner James said he had not been given a report on what is being done at the jail. Mr. Robinson said that housing federal inmates has helped balance the County's expenses for the Detention Center.

Commissioner Shank said she could not support taking money away from the Schools. Mr. Robinson said that he asked everyone to share in the loss and that the Schools do have a fund balance that they can utilize, if necessary. He said that if the State cuts again next year in this same area, it could mean \$1.7 million cut from the County.

Mr. Robinson said he wanted concurrence from the Board that they were supportive of his proposal for addressing these cuts in funding by the State by implementing it across the county funded agencies including the Schools and the Community College. Commissioner Owens said that it is the Manager's responsibility to manage the budget and he commended the Manager for his actions. Commissioner James said the Board members need to put pressure on the people in Raleigh about the budget shortfalls. He said the County must live within the budget.

Commissioner James **motioned** to endorse the Manager's recommendations on how to address the shortfalls in funding in Pitt County Government. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was approved seven to one with Commissioner Shank opposing the motion. Chairman Hammond said the State is reluctant to raise fees that would cut some of the shortfall. Commissioner Shank said she would support the Manager in his need to share this information with the Board but was concerned about his priorities in taking funds from the Schools.

Mr. Robinson then turned the meeting over to Glenn Harbeck, the facilitator. Mr. Harbeck commended Loretta Lewellyn on the work she did following the first workshop Board meeting.

Mr. Harbeck then led the Board through a discussion on the following goals.

Long Range Planning/Vision - Goal #4

Concerns driving this issue:

- Water and Sewer - especially sewer for "payback" areas
- Housing Facility for Social Services Operations

- Infrastructure for new industry and Housing
- School construction and roads -worry folks in Raleigh
- Recreation, specifically an office and nice facility for community schools program and let them build recreation programs at the school sites
- How to handle the increasing numbers of citizens and non-citizens using the Health, Mental Health and Social Services programs
- Pitt Community College/Public Schools - smaller classes
- Higher pay for employees of Social Services, Attorneys, MIS - look at overall plan to retain employees
- Remain fiscally sound
- Comprehensive Planning - using school redistricting, relationship to schools and overcrowding
- Look at county commissioners' district lines
- Courthouse completion
- Look 15-20 years for facility needs - C.I.P. i.e. animal shelter
- Revaluation

Additional Comments

- ? Pumping Station at Belvoir School should be utilized to extend sewer
- ? Board of Education needs to include County Commissioners in redistricting plan
- ? Six of nine employers do not pay property taxes - (Hospital, University, Community College, School System, Greenville Utilities, Pitt County Government)
- ? Comprehensive Plan for land use, parks/open space, infrastructure, schools

Mr. Robinson recapped the Board's discussion about having a strategic long-term plan for the County. They discussed the value of a comprehensive plan for the County and how it can help with the potential projects and expansions.

Commissioner Owens asked to be excused to go to a funeral at this time. The Chairman excused Commissioner Owens from the meeting.

- ? Master Facilities Plan Needed
 - ? 5-10 years
 - ? Financial Plan (Available and Needed)
 - ? Phased

- Chairman Hammond said two areas are asking to be zoned like the Northwest area.
- ? Areas asking for zoning - identify and pursue these first

Recreation and Parks

Concerns driving this issue:

- have a central location (one building) for community schools to coordinate all activities (still through Board of Education)
- facility close to school/gym/ball fields
- additional ball fields need to be coordinated out in the County - not one central park
- County to partner with municipalities in recreation (avoid turfism)
- need for impromptu family access to parks
- next 10 years-greater needs for older people
- open area, trails, distinct from facilities
- closer relationship between Council on Aging and Community Schools
- flooded areas being purchased
- like to expand school-oriented facilities we have
- need for County to have its own recreation and parks department 10-15 years down the road
- Suggest Alice Keene's title as "Pitt County Recreation, Parks and Community Schools" not by creating a new department but utilizing the existing programs for the past 23 years

(adding "Parks" to title to recognize that we do have parks at the school sites)

Additional Comments

- ? all 31 schools; school use first; after hours uses often -- basketball, soccer, etc.
- ? parcels of land being owned by the County as a result of the flood are now being inventoried to evaluate potential usage
- ? County currently gives office space to community schools in the Planning and Development Building
- ? Diverging opinions exist among the Board – expanded community schools program versus a county department
- ? Possibility of creating larger consolidated parks and recreation program partnering with municipalities (similar to the library partnership)

The Board discussed the structure of Community Schools and expanding the program into parks and recreation.

Ms. Keene stated that this Board may want to make a recommendation to the School Board to change the title to include Parks. The Board's previous action to include recreation in her title helped the public understand their mission.

Mr. Robinson said that the staff is going to put this information in a format for the Board to vote on in a future meeting. The Board took a five-minute break at this time.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Board discussed what areas within the human services programs need to be discussed.

- increase pay to professional staff and give competitive salaries to retain staff (18 vacancies in one section) 207 total positions
- maintenance and support of flood-related issues
- adequate housing (for staff) under one roof (centralization)
- facilities
- building to consolidate all the needs for the citizens - recommend locating with Health and Mental Health
- more education going to the citizens (e.g. underage pregnancy)
- short range, put administrative building for county government on this site and the over space in old hospital for social services
- outside efficiency study needed
- utilize government resources to eliminate people from having to have the social services – i.e. jobs
- maximum coordination between social services, mental health and health (Pitt County has high infant mortality as compared to State)
- greater needs in future: aging population, foster care, poverty - even with work first program, need more funding and personnel
- take advance of new "faith-based" initiative to supplement public social service burdens

- ? State will participate in cost of new social services building
- ? confidentiality law limits ability to share information about clients between human services department.
- ? State shortfalls in Medicaid in the short term
- ? Mr. Robinson said that the problems in salaries are mostly in the supervisor positions. In addition, he said the caseloads are overwhelming because the cases are so difficult.
- ? Do the caseworkers need sabbaticals to stay in the proper state of mind since these situations are so stressful?

Pitt County is a leader in eastern North Carolina which also offers a challenge because we can draw people into the county because we can offer better services.

Mr. Garrison said that Pitt County has one of the best benefit package plans around. He is beginning to see more applicants. Commissioner Ward spoke about teachers also leaving positions because of the stress factors.

? need qualified applicants to fill positions

Mr. Robinson said the staff would look at this information and present a plan back to the Board with costs involved. Commissioner James said he would not be here for the March 21st workshop meeting. Commissioner Shank said there needs to be an agenda for discussion at the joint meeting with the City of Greenville. Vice Chairman Bowen asked if it was the consensus of the Board to build a Social Services building at the County Office Park or build an administrative building. Vice Chairman Bowen and Commissioner James agreed that building a facility for social services was on target but others disagreed. Mr. Robinson said he had recommended the building of an administration building because it would be less expensive than building a social services building. Commissioner James said the Hospital needs room to expand and may be interested in purchasing the County Office Building which was the old Hospital. Commissioner Shank said the Board had said to wait to build the Social Services Building because the cost would be so much higher than the administrative building.

Ms. Burgdorff informed the Board that those going to Raleigh to meet with the Legislators on February 28th need to meet here by 10:00 a.m.

UPON MOTION by Commissioner James, seconded by Commissioner Ward, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board