

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
MARCH 21, 2001 WORKSHOP
8:30 a.m.**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop session on Wednesday, March 21, 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.

Commissioners present were:

David Hammond, Chairman
Glenn Bowen, Vice Chairman
Tom Coulson, Commissioner
Tom Johnson, Commissioner
Mark Owens, Commissioner
Randy Royal, Commissioner
Terry Shank, Commissioner
Beth Ward, Commissioner

Absent was:

Eugene James

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

Chairman Hammond called the meeting to order. Commissioner Royal gave the invocation. Commissioner Ward led in the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioner Owens commended the Manager and his staff for the information provided about facilities. He stated that he hoped that everyone recognized that today is a workshop session and not a day to make decisions that will effect the lives to come. Chairman Hammond said the County needs to keep the money where it needs to be and some of these items will need some revenue generation in order to provide the facilities and services. Commissioner Shank said the Board needs to keep in mind what it is that we want this County to look like when they are done and may not be in office any longer.

Mr. Robinson complimented the staff on the materials that have been put together.

Chairman Hammond asked why the Clark/Tugwell Building was on the list when the Board voted not to purchase that building. Mr. Robinson said the Board asked for staff to give them a recommendation and he would address that question later in the presentation. Staff has provided a detailed assessment of the buildings the County owns and the space needs that exist. Staff will make recommendations. Mr. Robinson said a proposed capital improvement program will also be presented and then hoped that the Board would give feedback on how to proceed and how to fund the plans.

Ms. Loretta Lewellyn presented the Goal Setting proposal and asked for input on the priorities. Commissioners discussed the meaning of Long-Range Planning/Vision and establishing the priorities.

Priorities Established by the Board:

- Long range planning/Vision (drives all the others)
- Education
- Community Safety/Emergency Services
- Facilities/Building Needs
- Human Services/ Social Services
- Recreation & Parks

The Board decided to leave the topics of Economic Development, Water & Sewer and Revenue Generation for staff to bring back to the Board.

Commissioner Ward motioned, seconded by Commissioner Shank, to accept the goals as stated. The motion passed with a seven to one vote with Commissioner Coulson voting in opposition. Commissioner Ward said she had read over the goals and objectives and did not see any problem with what was listed. Commissioner Ward stated she would amend her motion to include the objectives because that was her intent. Commissioner Shank agreed to the amendment and the motion passed with a seven to one vote. Commissioner Coulson opposed the motion.

Pitt County Board of Commissioners
Goals & Objectives for FY 2001-02
Adopted March 21, 2001

Priority No. 1 Long-Range Planning / Vision

Goal: To establish a vision for the future of Pitt County through long-range planning and preparation.

Common Objectives:

- 1-1.** Pitt County shall prepare and seek to then implement a Comprehensive Development Plan to address and organize land use, parks and open space, infrastructure (especially water and sewer) and schools.

- 1-2. A Master Facilities Plan for the next 5-10 years shall be prepared to address building and facility needs of the County.
- 1-3. The Pitt County Board of Commissioners and staff shall endeavor to plan for and generate the resources necessary to carry out the County's mission and long-range goals while maintaining a fiscally sound position and being mindful of Pitt taxpayers. A 5-year Financial Forecast that addresses County operations, debt and capital requirements shall be prepared and updated annually.

Priority No. 2 Education/Schools

Goal: *To improve the quality of education and schools.*

Common Objectives:

- 2-1. A cooperative joint working relationship between the Pitt County Board of Commissioners and Pitt County School Board shall be promoted to continue the Education Compact adopted in 2000 and to continuously update funding and performance goals between the two agencies. Improving local student scores, increasing teacher pay supplements, and meeting facility needs appropriately are desired outcomes of this collaboration. The Commissioners will invite the School Board to participate in joint meetings at least twice annually.
- 2-2. Pitt County will plan and facilitate funding to the Pitt County School Board that will place the County within the top one-third of all 100 counties in per pupil expenditure within four years, and thereafter, will monitor and adjust funding to remain within the top one-third. Pitt County Commissioners commit investment earnings on hospital sale proceeds and other revenue necessary to meet this objective to the best of their ability.

Priority No. 3 Community Safety/Emergency Services

Goal: *To improve community safety through improved emergency service programs.*

Common Objectives:

- 3-1. Pitt County will pilot the research, selection and implementation of an updated communications system that will provide for growth capacity and allow cross communication among emergency and public safety agencies in order to facilitate the most effective response and management of emergency and disaster scenarios. Pitt

County will seek legislation to expand uses of E911 Surcharge fees to include emergency communications equipment.

3-2. Pitt County will implement strategies proposed in the EMS Master Plan to improve coverage and inadequate response times and address inequities in staffing and funding across volunteer fire-rescue agencies.

3-3. Retention of trained, qualified, and experienced officers in the Sheriff's Department plays a vital role in community safety. Although the political process plays a role, a plan will be implemented that encourages and rewards training, experience, and longevity of identified at risk positions.

3-4. Interconnectivity among cable providers within Pitt County will be promoted to allow for more expedient dissemination of information in emergency situations.

3-5. A centralized, uniform phone system for departments and agencies of Pitt County shall be implemented to increase cost efficiencies and improves service to both the internal and external users.

Priority No. 4 Facilities/Building Needs

Goal: To address the facility and space needs of county government programs.

Common Objective:

4-1. A plan to address immediate, intermediate, and long-term facility needs of Pitt County and its agencies over the next 5-10 years shall be devised and implemented. The process shall involve education and information dissemination to the citizens of Pitt County regarding the needs and the County's plan for addressing those needs.

Priority No. 5 Human Services/Social Services

Goal: To improve the health and welfare of Pitt County citizens.

Common Objectives:

5-1. A facility to allow consolidation of Social Services functions shall be an immediate priority for Pitt County. Capacity and funding requirements will be prepared for short- and long-term projections for Board of Commissioner decision on which direction to pursue.

- 5-2.** A consultant will be retained to perform a thorough study of the Social Services department to investigate methods of efficiency, maximization of resources, and any areas that could improve or maximize the quality and level of services provided to Pitt citizens.
- 5-3.** Methods to hire and retain qualified applicants for at-risk positions within Social Services will be investigated and implemented (for example, increased hiring rate, bonuses, job rotation, etc.). Pitt County will also work closely with the State Office of Personnel to keep the positions classified appropriately.
- 5-4.** Technology improvements will be pursued for human service agencies that would allow greater interconnectivity and sharing of general client information to the extent allowed by law.

Priority No. 6 Recreation & Parks

Goal: To address the County's role in provision of recreation activities and facilities.

Common Objectives:

- 6-1.** Pitt County encourages and supports the continuation of the Pitt County Community Schools & Recreation program under direction of the Board of Education for coordination of school facilities and community programs and endorses expansion of resources at existing school facilities.
- 6-2.** Pitt County shall support the establishment of a Community Schools & Recreation administrative office complex either in coordination with a public school facility or in conjunction with the proposed Pitt County Council on Aging Senior Center.
- 6-3.** Pitt County shall incorporate plans for parks and open space uses into development of its Comprehensive Plan.
- 6-4.** The Pitt County Planning Department shall develop an inventory and use feasibility study of all properties acquired by the County in the flood buyout program, identifying potential recreational uses.
- 6-5.** Pitt County will seek cooperative relationships with area municipalities to allow equal availability of use of all recreational and parks facilities and programs by all citizens.

- 6-6.** The Pitt County Board of Commissioners will request the Pitt County Board of Education consider adding "Parks" as part of the Community Schools & Recreation name to more accurately identify and publicize the availability of parks at school sites.

Mr. Robinson said that the County does not have the revenue to do some of the projects. There are not enough revenues to do the administration building and will push the County to complete the courthouse renovations. Mr. Phil Dickerson stated that he had provided the Board with a summary and detailed listing of the buildings owned by the County. Mr. Dickerson presented the facilities by department and space needed per department by square footage, with a growth plan for five years and ten years. He stated he incorporated conference room space where required in the projections. He presented a 120 square feet per person requirement. He reviewed the rent paid by the County for satellite facilities. Rents received may include Agricultural Center and Technology Incubator. Social Services receive some reimbursements on their satellite facilities, which were reflected in the spreadsheet. Commissioner Owens asked if the County has provided space for the last forty years and it has done so in a satisfactory way. Mr. Dickerson agreed but stated that he feels the time has come when some space needs to be addressed. Commissioner Owens asked if staff had looked to see how appropriate the amount of space provided is for what the actual need is. Commissioner Owens asked if the common areas listed have been looked at for growth. Mr. Dickerson said this has been reviewed for years. He said the smaller buildings are more efficient for that reason because larger buildings have less usable space. Commissioner Owens asked if the reimbursement for federal prisoners has been included. Mr. Dickerson said that this reimbursement is hard to separate from the services and personnel needs. Mr. Robinson said that because of the structure of the old hospital building, that providing staff is not as efficient as it could be because of the way services have to be provided. Chairman Hammond said he counted forty-three different locations for where these services are provided. He agreed that the county has done well in the past to be as efficient as they have been.

Vice Chairman Bowen asked if this proposal for new facility would also include selling of the existing facility to generate revenue to build the properties needed. Commissioner Owens said that growth is a good problem. He asked if Mr. Dickerson had looked to see if there could be an exchange of properties between agencies. Mr. Dickerson said he had looked at those opportunities. He stated that there are people in locations that are rented now that could use the 15,000 square feet facility. Commissioner Owens asked about the Third Street Parole Office. Mr. Bulow said that the County is required to provide a level of space for the parole offices. Mr. Dickerson said that the Public Defenders Office really needs some additional space.

Commissioner Shank said the age of the building, upkeep, how long the buildings will last and reconditioning of buildings need to be considered. Mr. Dickerson agreed that in the long term it does need to be considered. Mr. Dickerson said the older building is harder to keep in proper condition especially the heating, air conditioning and plumbing. Commissioner Owens said that when he walks in for Board meetings no one is in the Social Services office area. He said he would like to look at the utilization of the offices. Mr. Robinson said that these are case managers and they are out in the field and when they are in their offices, they need privacy. Chairman Hammond noted that Mr. Garrison said he had nineteen vacancies. Commissioner Coulson said that smaller departments tend to be more efficient and that every

department had grown in size since 1990. He said the challenge should be issued for departments to be more efficient. Mr. Robinson stated that there has been an explosion of abuse of the elderly. He stated that some years ago, Pitt County was on the watch list by the State. Commissioner Royal said that if the Board would do a walk through Social Services they would see that they are stacked and some times there are two or three people in the offices. Mr. Bulow said there is a standard that has to be met or the County will lose its reimbursement. Commissioner Owens said there have been so many mandates from the State that there has been a lot of growth in staff. Mr. Bulow said that one year the State gave the County fourteen staff members. The Board discussed the use of cubicles where feasible.

Mr. Dickerson said he has listed what he thinks the priorities are and that six out of eight of the priorities effect the other priorities. He said when three-year lease is over on the Edwards building on Ninth Street, then the lease period will be complete. The Board asked if the lease could be negotiated for a longer time. Mr. Bulow said the Sheriff is using this building and the owner would not negotiate a lease longer than three years when they did the original lease. The owner is not interested in selling the property.

Mr. Dickerson provided the following recommendation of priorities:

- 1) Purchase Clark/Tugwell Building (200 West Third Street)
- 2) Renovate the 1910 and 1960's Courthouse wings
- 3) New Administration Building on County Office Building property
- 4) Law Enforcement Center at County Office Building
- 5) New Animal Shelter
- 6) New Storage Building
- 7) New Social Services Building at County Office Park
- 8) Community Schools Building

Total Cost \$29,015,000

Mr. Robinson said that if the Administration building is built, then Social Services staff could be moved back into the County Office Building. Mr. Robinson said that County properties should not be sold until it has been studied and determined that there is no longer a need for that property. About 7600 square feet is needed for the Administrative Offices that could be moved out of the County Office Building, to free up space for Social Services. Mr. Ed Garrison spoke about the Federal Government reimbursements. He said there would be a slight decrease in the Federal reimbursement, but nothing like what the State has cut back on. He said the Federal reimbursement is secure at this time. There are two areas of shortfall in Social Services, \$600,000 to \$700,000 between Medicaid and Foster Care. He said there would be a small amount of change in the reimbursement for space. Mr. Garrison said he would like to get as many of his people under one roof so he can have control of his staff. He said he did not know if now was the time to build a building. Commissioner Owens asked if the County Office Building could accommodate all of his staff if the administrative staff was moved out of this building. Mr. Garrison spoke about the satellite facility where flood recovery programs were being administered which would not have been needed as of September 2001 and a day care center would not be accommodated. He said the logical approach is to build a smaller less expensive building to accommodate the other departments. Vice Chairman Bowen asked if all of Social Services programs are mandated. Vice Chairman Bowen asked if the Social Services Board took the budget shortfall into consideration when they voted to add

personnel. Vice Chairman Bowen asked about not mandated programs. Mr. Garrison said the County funds the general assistance program, which offers emergency assistance to people in need.

Mr. Dickerson continued with his comments about the priorities. He said some of the Sheriff's offices be built. He said the animal shelter is another priority. He said the SPCA has offered to help with the operations of the animal shelter but he did not think the County should depend on that support. He thinks the County should provide a new animal shelter facility. Commissioner Coulson said he is not usually in favor of taxing but that the people should pay a tax for the animals. He said there should also be a fee to have them spayed or neutered. He said this way it would not affect the County financially. Mr. Dickerson said that if the County does not do something to address the control of animals besides building a shelter, then this problem would not get any better. Mr. Bulow stated that the Tax Collector recommended the elimination of the animal tax because these taxes were difficult to collect and was not being collected. Mr. Bulow said he felt a nuisance-based ordinance for animals should be put into place. Commissioner Ward said the facility has to be built first before these other plans can be implemented. Commissioner Coulson said he felt there should be a leash law and advocating a means to eliminate the problem.

Mr. Dickerson stated that the next priority is a storage building. He said that if the Technology Incubator continues to expand and bring in new businesses, then the County is going to have to remove what they have stored in the Technology Incubator. Mr. Dickerson said that this situation could happen and the County would have to react rather quickly.

Mr. Dickerson said the Community Schools building would be a stand alone building and this would open up space in the Developmental Services Building where Planning could expand. Mr. Robinson reviewed the facilities that are on the priority list.

Chairman Hammond called for a short break.

Mr. Robinson asked Melonie Bryan and Phil Dickerson to address the financing plan for construction of these facilities. Chairman Hammond asked how much debt the County has at this time. Ms. Bryan reported that the County has \$92 million in outstanding long-term debt with \$30 million supported by taxes, \$3 million supported by landfill and other enterprise funds, and \$60 million for schools. The law says counties should not exceed eight percent of its tax base. Ms. Bryan said if the Board did everything they have discussed today, it still would not be more than two percent. Chairman Hammond asked if the Board did everything presented then how much tax increase would the County need to implement. Ms. Bryan said that would be about a six-cent tax increase. Mr. Robinson said each cent on the tax rate brings in over \$500,000.

Ms. Bryan presented the first draft of the Capital Improvement Plan. Presented a plan borrowing about \$17 million to move forward with top priorities of Administration Building, Animal Shelter, Clark Building, Courthouse, Recreation Facility, and Storage building. Mr. Robinson said the Community College needs \$6.2 million for match for the bond funds. He said two cents on the tax rate will not do all the projects but three cents would allow the County to put some money back. Ms. Bryan said these figures are based on true cash that it would take to do projects. Commissioner Shank asked

about the new middle school. Ms. Bryan said this needs to be projected by the Schools. She said the schools have been doing their projects by pay as you go and not by debt service. Mr. Robinson said they have a revenue stream to pay for it. He said there have been 200 students added each year. Ms. Bryan said with the redistricting of schools in process, that the School Administration does not want to address facilities needs at this time. Ms. Bryan said Pitt County has an AA bond rating. She said the bond rating agencies benchmark for counties this size is not more than 15% of the budget for debt service payments.

Mr. Robinson said that some of the numbers are distorted because of the flood recovery programs that are in the budget. Ms. Bryan said there is thirty-six percent of budget is in fund balance. Average counties in the same size are usually in the twenty percent range. Ms. Bryan said this fund is inflated because the payments from the Hospital are in the fund balance and this Board made a decision not to spend those funds. Chairman Hammond said the Board voted to invest the principal and use the interest. Mr. Robinson said the County can borrow money at low rates currently and Ms. Bryan said this is an excellent time to borrow money. Mr. Robinson said the bids on the courthouse will be coming into the County in April and will be brought to the Board. He said they would be asking the Board to go to the market for the Courthouse financing.

Commissioner Royal asked about the investments of the Hospital money. Mr. Robinson said he is looking at staying on the same course on those investments. Mr. Robinson said that in 1999 they refinanced the School Debt that has leveled out over time. In 2008-2009 the debt will start dropping off for the proposed financing. He said three-cents tax increase would take care of this financing. Chairman Hammond spoke about Greenspan dropping the interest rate. Mr. Robinson said you need to look at the cost of money, and now would be a good time to get a good contractor that can give better prices right now. Ms. Bryan stated that it takes about sixty days to do a bond issue financing for the renovation of the courthouse. She said the preliminary work needs to be started soon if the bids will be in for the courthouse renovations in the end of April.

Mr. Robinson requested the Board meet on April 30th to approve the final financial plan. Ms. Bryan said they will have every departments' budgets by then and will have more firm numbers. Commissioner Coulson said Governor Easley has budget problems this year and is looking at having budget problems next year. Mr. Robinson said that the 9-1-1 Legislation requested by Pitt County has been receiving more favorable responses from the Legislators than other counties proposals. Chairman Hammond spoke about the Halifax County bill for 9-1-1. Ms. Burgdorff stated that the Pitt County legislation is targeted for using the funds only for communications.

Commissioner Ward asked about the scheduling of the bond issue and approval time frames. Ms. Bryan said she would bring it to the meeting on April 16th or the April 30th meeting. Vice Chairman Bowen asked to have the information prior to the April 30th meeting, if the Board is expected to approve a bond issue. Commissioner Owens said he need specifics about the debt service and to add to that the Education Compact and what it will take to fund the Schools. He stated that he supported the following items; the funds for completing the courthouse, funding the 9-1-1 needs with the State's approval of use of funds and then to fund sufficient space to provide replacement space for the Administration offices of the County, if the County Office

Building is sufficient for Social Services. Following that he stated he would not be willing to commit himself further without additional information on finances. Mr. Robinson said the staff would bring back solid numbers and recommendations to the Board.

Chairman Hammond asked if an ad Valorem tax increase is going to be requested. Mr. Robinson said he does not have the numbers to make a firm comment on that as of yet but he has a "gut" feeling that there is not enough money to do everything that is needed. He said that the departments need to look and see if they need to continue doing everything that they are doing. Commissioner Owens said the refinancing could be big savings also. He stated that now is the time to use the bond market for financing.

Mr. Robinson said he has a request from the Council on Aging for assistance with a building but he needs direction from the Board on that item. He said Dr. Byrd is going to ask for a specific amount of money. He says this is a new request.

Chairman Hammond asked about the Technology Park that is on the first draft of the Capital Improvement Plan. Commissioner Coulson asked about the \$2 million request for voting machines from the Board of Elections. Ms. Bryan said this is just the departments' requests or "wish lists". Mr. Robinson said Dr. Byrd would present his request at one of the regular board meeting. Commissioner Coulson asked if the Manager gives a directive to encourage the departments to save money or does the Board need to offer some incentive to the employees to save money. Commissioner Shank said this all needs to be tied into the goal and measurements of each department. Mr. Robinson said that Pitt County staff adopted a mission to be "The Best in the State" and a leader in the East. Commissioner Owens said that he has heard from Dr. Byrd already and there is no need to hear from him before the staff has presented the budget numbers. Mr. Robinson said if the Board is not interested then he would tell him. He said that he would not add the Council on Aging building to the County's budget.

Commissioner Owens motioned for the Board to meet on April 30th at 9:00 a.m. in the Auditorium. Commissioner Coulson stated he would not be present. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion.

The Board discussed the time and place. Commissioner Owens withdrew his previous motion.

Commissioner Owens motioned to meet on April 30th at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium. Commissioner Shank asked if the Board could meet in the Emergency Operations Center because it is more conducive to discussion.

Commissioner Owens amended his motion to meet on April 30th at 7:00 p.m. in the Emergency Operations Center. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Ward motioned, seconded by Vice Chairman Bowen, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board