

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES FOR JUNE 25, 2001**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a recessed regular session on Monday, June 25, 2001, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina.

Commissioners present:

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

Absent:

Randy Royal, Commissioner

Staff present:

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

CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Hammond

Chairman Hammond reconvened the meeting from the recessed regular meeting on June 18, 2001. He stated that the purpose of this meeting is to adopt the budget ordinance which is a document that guides the expenditures of the budget that is adopted.

Mr. Robinson said that the purpose for today is to adopt the budget ordinance. He reviewed some changes by reading the following Memo to the Board:

Enclosed please find the Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2001-02 which includes \$75,808,453 in the General Fund and a total of \$164,607,610 in all Funds.

The ordinance maintains the tax rate at 68 cents as directed by Commissioners with 1.75 cents allocated to the Industrial Development Fund and 66.25 to the General Fund. The ordinance sets the rates for Fire Districts, and also sets a new EMS/Rescue District which includes all of Pitt County with the exception of Greenville. Establishment of this district eliminates the tax for the Ayden, Bell Arthur and Eastern Pines EMS/Rescue taxing districts. The EMS tax is set at 3 cents.

Under Section IV and V of the ordinance designating certain levels of authority to the Manager and Financial Services Director, material dollar amounts which have not been revised in several years have been updated. The Manager's transfer authority between departments within a fund is increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000. This amount has not been updated since 1997. Contract, service agreement and change order authority is increased from \$30,000 to \$50,000. This amount has not been updated since 1998.

Additionally, a provision to allow the Manager to decrease budgets upon notification of funding decreases without bringing it before the Board has been included. This provision will assist in keeping routine transactions from the Board's agenda when notification of changes in levels of state, federal or grant funding is received. Actions that would affect staffing or create an

increase to a budget would still come before the Board.

The ordinance sets the commissioners monthly salary at \$795 which is an increase of approximately 2% which coincides with the cost of living increase being granted to employees.

If you have any questions about the Budget or the Budget Ordinance, please feel free to call me.

Vice Chairman Bowen asked the Manager about the authority to sign contracts being changed in Section IV from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Mr. Robinson said that the contracts that are not within his signature authority sometimes have to wait for a Board meeting before they can be approved. Vice Chairman Bowen said he was not comfortable with this change. Commissioner James asked that these items come back to the Board later. Commissioner Ward stated that this is not a big request and or large difference and that she trusts the Manager to make those decisions. Chairman Hammond said he does not remember this item being a matter of concern. He said he did not want anyone circumventing the Board's authority because the Board answers to the public.

Commissioner James **motioned** to continue with the same funding authority and there be no increase in authority. Chairman Hammond seconded the motion.

Commissioner Coulson made a **substitute motion** to allow the authority to stay at \$50,000 with the condition that the Manager be required to report items he approved between \$30,000 and \$50,000 back to the Board. He said this could be used without a lot of problems and the Board should trust the Manager because he is pledging his job. Commissioner Shank seconded the motion. The Board discussed this possible change. Chairman Hammond said he reviewed the last meeting. Chairman Hammond spoke about this increase and his concern about this change. He asked about the County policy on these items. He said that sometimes practice and policy get mixed up. He would like a copy of the policy. Chairman Hammond also spoke about a concern that there may be an attempt to spend more money without the approval of the Board or notification to the Board.

Ms. Bryan gave an example of a repetitive contract that would be applicable in this situation. She stated this only gives staff the authority to follow the direction from the Board. Commissioner James said the contracts need to be brought back to the Board and could be put on the consent agenda.

Chairman Hammond called for a vote on the substitute motion. In favor of the substitute motion were: Commissioner Shank, Commissioner Ward, Commissioner Coulson, and Commissioner Johnson. Opposed to the substitute motion were: Commissioner Owens, Chairman Hammond, Commissioner James, and Vice Chairman Bowen. The motion failed.

Chairman Hammond then called for a vote on the original motion to continue with the same funding authority with no increase in authority. In favor of this motion were: Commissioner Owens, Commissioner James, Chairman Hammond, and Vice Chairman Bowen. Opposed to the motion were: Commissioner Ward, Commissioner Shank, Commissioner Coulson, and Commissioner Johnson. The motion failed with a four to four vote.

Vice Chairman Bowen said that if this was part of the budget ordinance then it needs to be removed. Commissioner James said this item was added to the ordinance. Chairman Hammond said these items were not discussed during the budget workshops. Mr. Robinson said this section has been part of the budget ordinance for years. Chairman Hammond was insistent in asking about who gave the authority to put this item on the budget ordinance? Commissioner Coulson called for a point of order stating the Chairman was out of order and was not supposed to be in active debate and was being disrespectful. He stated that the Chairman needed to pass the gavel and let someone else chair the meeting if was going to be in active

debate. Chairman Hammond said he was calm and that the Board had not authorized that Sections IV and V be in the budget ordinance.

Commissioner Ward **motioned** to remove Sections IV and V from the budget ordinance so the Board could move on the budget ordinance and bring those two sections back to the Board so they could make a decision at the next meeting on those items. Commissioner Coulson seconded the motion.

Commissioner Owens offered a **substitute motion to** approve the budget ordinance omitting Sections IV and V and remove the seven-year revaluation. He stated he thought this was Commissioner Ward's intention to approve the budget ordinance in her motion. She stated that she only intended to remove the two sections from the budget ordinance. Mr. Robinson said that the Board had already given approval for the revaluation and that staff had taken action to move forward with this project. Ms. Bryan said some staff began working on revaluation today and some staff had been working for two weeks. Commissioner James seconded the motion. Commissioner Ward said if this was not where \$50,000 a year has been put aside for revaluation and is now being brought out and being spent. Ms. Bryan stated that she was correct. Commissioner Owens asked about the \$226,000 and said that it is not spent. Ms. Bryan said this has been in a special revenue fund not the regular fund balance.

Chairman Hammond called for a vote on the substitute motion. In favor of the motion were: Commissioner Owens, Commissioner James, Vice Chairman Bowen, Chairman Hammond, and Commissioner Coulson. Opposed to the motion were: Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Shank, and Commissioner Ward. The substitute motion passed with a five to three vote.

Mr. Robinson said the Board has just decided to go back to a eight-year revaluation cycle. Commissioner Ward said her intention on her motion was to isolate the two sections of the budget ordinance that were being debated and return those items back for approval at the next meeting.

Commissioner James offered a motion to adopt the budget ordinance with the corrections that have made but it was noted that the budget ordinance was approved as part of Commissioner Owens' motion.

Chairman Hammond asked about Section IV. c. that addresses transfer of funds for salaries and merit increases. Mr. Robinson said this was a routine matter where reserved salaries are located and just allows staff to put the money in the appropriate line item.

Commissioner James **motioned** to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Robinson asked to make a comment to the Board before they adjourned the meeting. He said that he had routinely brought items back to the Board that he considered routine and applicable. He said he did not feel he was doing anything out of the ordinary and the whole budget ordinance was sent to the Board ahead of time so it could be reviewed and questioned prior to the meeting. It was consistent with last year's budget ordinance.

Ms. Bryan stated she wanted to make sure she understood the Board's intentions and asked if she was supposed to go to the Tax Office and terminate five employees that were hired to work on the tax revaluation. Chairman Hammond told Ms. Bryan she was supposed to do what the Board instructed her to do and she should need no further instruction.

Commissioner Ward said that it bothered her that the Board voted meetings ago to go to a seven-year revaluation cycle and today have taken that vote back. She said she disagreed with this action. Commissioner Coulson said he was not in favor of the revaluation but he remembered an eight to one vote to have nighttime meetings and it was later changed.

Commissioner James said he had originally voted in support of the revaluation because he thought it would help the County financially but now he is convinced that the Board would spend whatever money is available.

Commissioner James restated his motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted.

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board