

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
FEBRUARY 25, 2002 MINUTES**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met on Monday, February 25, 2002, at 5:00 PM in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina.

Commissioners present:

Randy Royal, Commissioner
Terry Shank, Commissioner
Tom Johnson, Commissioner
Tom Coulson, Commissioner
Beth Ward, Vice Chairwoman
Glenn Bowen, Commissioner
Eugene James, Commissioner
Mark Owens, Jr., Chairman
David Hammond, Commissioner

Staff present:

Phil Dickerson, County Manager
Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services
Susan J. Banks, Clerk to the Board
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney
John Bulow, Assistant County Manager
Various Department Heads

Call to Order

Summary of Information

Chairman Owens called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Invocation and Pledge

Summary of Information

The invocation was offered by Commissioner James.
The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Shank.

Approval of Agenda

Motion:

**Motion to approve agenda as submitted.
Motion made by Commissioner Randy Royal.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Eugene James.**

Vote Record:

Tom Coulson	Yes
Beth Ward	Yes
Randy Royal	Yes
David Hammond	Yes
Glenn Bowen	Yes

Terry Shank	Yes
Eugene James	Yes
Tom Johnson	Yes
Mark Owens, Jr.	Yes

Total Yes Votes: 9
Total No Votes: 0
Motion Passed

Items for Decision
Budget Concerns

Summary of Information

- 1 - EMS Funding for FY 2002-03
- 2 - Address Revenue Shortage in Current Budget
- 3 - Review and Update Board's Priorities & Goals
- 4 - Review and Prioritize Capital Improvement Plan

EMS Funding for FY 2002-2003

Mr. Bobby Joyner addressed the Board on the EMS proposal. He said he reviewed with the committee the line item budgets for each of the rescue squads. He reviewed budgets with the squad captains. With a three-cents tax, there will be a \$256,000+ shortfall. The other option is a four-cents tax which would give a \$91,000+ reserve. The squads have put off things for a year. If they go to paramedic level they will need equipment that is not in the budget. They worked with staff and committee to bring the revenue together with the expenditures. Commissioner Johnson said he supports the three-cents which was tried last year. Bethel runs high because they do not have any volunteers. The committee is going to work further on the need for workers. Commissioner James asked if they had looked at consolidating squads or reorganizing operations. Mr. Joyner said the committee was working to get a plan together for this year. If we had the money to staff the squads, the people are not out there. Mr. Joyner said the squads do not want to give up their operations but they are willing to do whatever is necessary. There is money in this formula for Greenville. Mr. Joyner said the goal is to put one paramedic in every one of ten squads. There is \$1.8 million generated from the billing for calls and the three-cent tax rate together. Vice Chairwoman Ward asked if they had looked at the other recommendations from the consultant. Mr. Joyner said the committee intends to look at those options in the future. Commissioner Shank said a timeline needs to be established for this plan. If the funding can be accomplished, paramedics will be in all parts of the county. Ms. Helen Reel said it would take more money to get paramedics in all squads in the County. She said it will fall back on the Board of Commissioners and what they are willing to give financially to the squads. Mr. Joyner said there is not currently a paramedic in all of the squads but there will be except Bethel and they are working towards getting one in Bethel. Ms. Reel explained how they are going to accomplish the provision of paramedic level of care.

Mr. Joyner said that a County EMS plan is required by the State. Vice Chairwoman Ward noted the comparison of EMS funding by other counties provided by Mr. Joyner and how Pitt County has underfunded this program. She said the level of service needs to be raised. Commissioner Coulson asked what percentage rate they used for collections. Mr. Joyner said they were using a 40% collection rate which was provided by the collections consultant. Commissioner Hammond noted that the City of Greenville was not included in this plan. Mr. Joyner said he has a meeting with the Town of Ayden tonight at 7:00 pm and a meeting later with the Town of Winterville and hopes to get their approval on the resolution for a countywide EMS tax. Greenville plans to stay the way they are currently operating their emergency services. Commissioner James said without Greenville and the extraterritorial jurisdiction, there are probably only 40,000 people being served. He said the figures are misleading.

Mr. Dickerson said \$86,500 is paid to Greenville to handle calls outside of their incorporated limits. He said that the Board needs to give some guidance on how they want the staff to proceed at this point.

Motion:

Accept recommendation for a three-cent tax rate increase for emergency rescue services and the remaining \$250,000 deficit will be funded from the County's fund balance.

Motion made by Commissioner Glenn Bowen.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Terry Shank.

Vote Record:

Tom Coulson	Yes
Beth Ward	Yes
Randy Royal	Yes
David Hammond	Yes
Glenn Bowen	Yes
Terry Shank	Yes
Eugene James	Yes
Tom Johnson	Yes
Mark Owens, Jr.	Yes

Total Yes Votes: 9

Total No Votes: 0

Motion Passed

Appointments

Summary of Information

Chairman appointed Commissioners Eugene James, Randy Royal, and Tom Johnson to serve on the Committee to help Mental Health with the writing of a business plan.

Motion:

Motion to appoint the County Finance Officer and the County Attorney to the business plan committee of Mental Health as regular voting members.

Motion made by Commissioner David Hammond.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Eugene James.

Vote Record:

Tom Coulson	Yes
Beth Ward	Yes
Randy Royal	Yes
David Hammond	Yes
Glenn Bowen	Yes
Terry Shank	Yes
Eugene James	Yes
Tom Johnson	Yes
Mark Owens, Jr.	Yes

Total Yes Votes: 9

Total No Votes: 0

Motion Passed

Address Revenue Shortage in Current Budget

Summary of Information

Ms. Bryan referred to the agenda package presented to the Board on February 18, 2002 with recommendations from the Staff on how to address the combined impact of two actions, the governor's reduction in reimbursements and the economic shortfall in revenues. She said the staff restricted spending in November and looked at revenues for the balance of this fiscal year. There was \$1.3 million generated in cutbacks from the general government departments which meant that the general government departments covered the whole deficit in the fall. On February 18, departments once again looked at ways to reduce spending, as well as outside agencies where the funds have not already been paid out one hundred percent.

The staff recommendation was as follows:

- *All vacant positions should be frozen until at least July 1, 2002.
- *All non-essential spending is halted for the balance of the fiscal year.
- *All travel and training is suspended for the balance of the fiscal year.
- *Funding to outside agencies will be reduced on a pro-rate basis
 - *\$341,000 reduction – Board of Education
 - *\$40,150 reduction – Pitt Community College
 - *\$1,980 reduction – Council on Aging
 - *\$6,050 reduction – Sheppard Memorial Library
 - *Transfers to Health, Mental Health and Social Services will be reviewed in June to determine funds needed to cover annual service levels and maintenance of effort requirements.
- *Non-permanent positions will be considered for furlough.

(The Manager will consider all appeals to these actions on a case-by-case basis.)

Departments heads currently use part-time hourly employees so full time staff is not called out. If these positions are furloughed, it will effect the level of services provided by the departments. Exceptions to this policy would be grant funded positions and essential services. Ms. Bryan stated that \$1.1 million could not be absorbed internally. She stated that 65% of the reductions will come from general programs. This decision will have a great impact on planning and flood recovery, Sheriff and Detention Center and Legal. Ms. Bryan stated that next year people will be playing catch up and behind the curve before they even get started. The County will have a decrease in the fund balance percentage. She stated that this could impact cash flow in October and November when alot of funds are being paid out but are not coming in yet. She was also concerned that this could effect the County's bond rating. Ms. Bryan reviewed the history of fund balance. There was a tract record of fund balance being added to when times were good but fund balance has been being used over the last few years.

Chairman Owens said Staff is requesting to implement this procedure to run through June 30 of 2002.

Sheriff Manning said the proposal to freeze existing vacant positions will have a tremendous impact on the Detention Center and the Sheriff's Office. He said they are already operating on less than what they need to get the job done. People at detention center that cannot take time off. There are 8 or 9 positions vacant. He will have three retirees at the end of this fiscal year. They have been making promotions to fill positions. He said they just cannot freeze positions. In six months, there will be twice the number of positions open. He said he is afraid that the employees will get overburdened and he will lose the employees he has now. He suggested that maybe the positions not be filled as rapidly in the past but there will be a big morale problem following the implementation of this plan. Chairman Owens said Manager could entertain appeals on a case by case basis. Sheriff Manning said the Manager is not going to have much flexibility. Sheriff Manning said that he answers to the citizens of the County as an

elected official and this Board is cutting his budget. He said the Manager is answering to this Board which will make him side with the Board more closely than with the departments. He has a manpower crisis at the Sheriff's office currently and this will magnify the problem.

Commissioner Hammond spoke about deputies seeking other positions at places like the Hospital. Vice Chairwoman Beth Ward asked how many positions were vacant at the Detention Center? The Sheriff responded that he has two deputies, two telecommunicators and eight detention officers currently open. The two deputies were upper level positions where the deputies have retired. Telecommunicator positions have traditionally been difficult to keep filled. He said this will cripple them and in six months it will be critical.

Vice Chairwoman asked how they arrived at the figures from the hiring freeze? Ms. Bryan said they looked at the savings with staffing patterns that were in place at the time. Vice Chairwoman said all departments are not created equal. Sheriff Manning asked about the appeal process and asked that they not totally freeze the vacancies that currently exist in his departments. He said he is getting ready to lose another deputy to Greenville Police Department. He suggested that some be frozen but not all of them. Several officers are out on workers comp and medical leave right now. Commissioner James asked how many positions are open right now. Sheriff Manning said he just gave two offers for employment to Detention officers and have two more applications on his desk. He also has one telecommunicator position that needs to be filled. Commissioner James said if the positions are not filled then the County will have to pay overtime to the existing employees. Commissioner Hammond said the County has stepped up for EMS needs and need to step up for the Sheriff's needs. Commissioner Hammond said as a Board, they need to do what they can to protect the citizens of this County. Mr. Dickerson said that he and the Sheriff could work something out where the Sheriff would be satisfied.

Board of Education

Dr. Priddy handed out information about Ms. Pat Persinger, Grifton Elementary School, who was teacher of the year for her school and the County. She is now the regional teacher of the year and will compete with five others statewide. She thanked the Board for their support of education. She said the teachers are out there doing the best that they can.

Dr. Priddy spoke about a meeting with the Manager and the Board Chairman. He said he appreciates the support and solidarity from this Board. He requested that this Board reaffirm and maintain the Education Compact. Improvements have been made through this process. He provided a letter from Joel Butler, Chairman, Greenville-Pitt Chamber of Commerce in support of the schools and Education compact. Dr. Priddy said they are willing to tighten their belts and can do it without affecting their classrooms, teachers or children. He said with the County holding back \$341,000, they will have to make adjustments from now to the end of the fiscal year. There will be some freezes and delays in filling positions. There will be essential spending at this point in time. He said he does not want to put this Board in a bad position and they have worked together and do not want to change that relationship. Dr. Priddy said they used money from their fiscal audit to supply the newly constructed schools. Education Compact monies have been invested in the classrooms. On behalf of the Board of Education, they are doing the best to use their funds frugally and looking for funds outside of taxpayers funds. It is still critical that the Compact still be in place. The new high school will take all of the \$1.7 million in new money for operations. Commissioner Bowen asked about budget cuts referred to in Mr. Butler's letter. Dr. Priddy said Mr. Butler is referring to efforts made last year from the Governor's cuts.

Commissioner Shank asked about the allocations to the Human Services agencies. Ms. Bryan said if they are held to the restrictions, they will not need their one-twelfth payment in June.

Commissioner James **motioned** to follow the recommendation of staff until June 30th, 2002 and then revisit the budget.

Mr. Garrison, Social Services Director, said this is getting to be repetitious. He said they cut \$700,000 last year in a total of three cuts requested by the Manager. He said he can not oppose staff recommendation. He said he should have the right to make the cuts to his department that will make the least problems for his department. He said that after being reassured by the Interim Manager that the appeal process will work fairly he was satisfied. Mr. Garrison said that the Department of Social Services is there to protect the elderly and children. He said there will be an increase in Medicaid in next year's budget. He complemented the commissioners on their approach. Commissioner Johnson said his concerned about the Board of Education cut and only on the recommendation of staff would he vote for it.

Motion:

Commissioner James motioned to follow the staff recommendation on the budget cuts until June 30 and then revisit the available funds and budget.

Commissioner Bowen seconded the motion.

Commissioner Hammond offered an amendment to the motion to exclude the Sheriff's Department. The amendment failed for lack of a second.

The original motion was approved with an eight to one vote. Commissioner Hammond opposed the motion.

Adjourn

Motion:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Eugene James.

Motion seconded by Commissioner David Hammond.

Vote Record:

Tom Coulson	Yes
Beth Ward	Yes
Randy Royal	Yes
David Hammond	Yes
Glenn Bowen	Yes
Terry Shank	Yes
Eugene James	Yes
Tom Johnson	Yes
Mark Owens, Jr.	Yes

Total Yes Votes: 9

Total No Votes: 0

Motion Passed

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board