

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
JUNE 11, 2002 MINUTES**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, June 11, 2002, at 7:00 PM in the Commissioners' Auditorium, Pitt County Office Building, 1717 W. 5th Street, Greenville, North Carolina.

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners Absent:

Randy Royal, Commissioner  
David Hammond, Commissioner

Staff present:

Scott Elliott, County Manager  
Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services  
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney  
Susan Banks, Clerk  
John Bulow, Assistant County Manager

**Call to Order**

Chairman Owens called the meeting to order stating that the purpose of this meeting was to hear public comment about the proposed Fiscal Year 2002-2003 County budget.

**Invocation and Pledge**

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

**Approval of Agenda**

**Motion:**

**Motion to approve the agenda as submitted with the addition of motions to be made by Commissioner Johnson and Vice Chairwoman Ward.**

**Motion made by Commissioner Eugene James.**

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Glenn Bowen.**

**Motion Passed Unanimously.**

**Public Hearing**

*Fiscal Year 2002-2003 County Budget*

**Information Provided with the Agenda**

Manager will make brief comments.

## Meeting Notes

Mr. Elliott gave a brief overview and the highlights of this proposed budget as presented to the Board on June 10, 2002. The highlights include no property tax increase, fully funded education compact, 3 cents EMS tax, reduces spending in general fund departments, and uses portion of hospital portfolio to allow for cash flow. A charts were provided on revenue sources, general fund revenues and expenditures. The highest expenditures were for Human Services areas including Social Services, Mental Health and Health for over \$56 million. The second highest expenditure was Education. General government was the third highest expense area. Mr. Elliott gave an explanation of how the fund balance was going to be used as follows:

- \$41.3 M Undesignated General Fund Balance as of June 30, 2002 (estimated)
- 30.0 M Investment Portfolio Fund Balance
- \$11.3 M County Discretionary Fund Balance
  
- \$ 8.9 M General Fund Balance Budgeted – FY 02-03
- \$ 0.5 M Public Health Fund Balance Budgeted – FY 02-03
- \$ 1.9 M Remaining Discretionary Fund Balance
  
- + \$ 6.2 M Investment Portfolio Usage
  
- \$ 8.1 M Discretionary Fund Balance (7.5%)
  
- + \$23.8 M Investment Portfolio Fund Balance
  
- \$31.9 Combined Fund Balance (29.3%)**

Mr. Elliott said that he wanted to review the \$400 service charge on rescue calls. He asked the County Attorney to review the legality of exempting certain classes of volunteers from the \$400 charge if they have to use the rescue squad. Ms. Burgdorff stated that she talked with the Attorney General's office. She said they issued a legal opinion and said that based on current case law that it is not a good policy to exempt any group of citizens from a fee due to equal rights and recommends not doing this because it could be challenged. She said they had not had many jurisdictions that have attempted to do this exemption because of the potential complications.

Mr. Elliott said that when the Board is ready to adopt the budget, there are three documents that need to be included; EMS Resolution, Hospital Portfolio Resolution and the Budget Ordinance for FY 2002-2003.

Chairman Owens gave the citizens present the guidelines for speaking also stating that if there is a group of citizens with the same interest, they may assign one speaker and be recognized as a group. If someone is speaking for a group they may be allowed more than three minutes.

Commissioner Johnson read the motion from May 28<sup>th</sup> stating that he felt the last half of the motion needs to be changed and clarified.

### **Motion:**

**To add to the motion made on May 28th stating "Motioned for County to go into the hospital fund for \$6.2 million to pay the County back to General Fund for \$4.5 million already spent on education and the \$1.7 million that is going to be given to the schools this year, and in addition, to instruct the manager to bring back a budget using County general funds to balance the budget" and that those funds derived from the hospital portfolio were to be used only to serve as cash flow.**

**Motion made by Commissioner Tom Johnson.**

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Glenn Bowen.**

### **Motion Passed Unanimously.**

Chairman Owens stated that Commissioner Royal and Commissioner Hammond were excused from this meeting stating they had contacted him and the Clerk indicating that they would not be present.

Vice Chairwoman Ward said after hearing the budget proposal for EMS money and the addition of \$800,000 to that proposal, she said she would like to have another session to discuss just the EMS plan.

### **Motion:**

**Motion for the Board to meet again on Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Auditorium to continue budget deliberations. Vice Chairwoman Ward said the Board needs time to discuss just the EMS plans and budget.**

**Motion made by Vice Chairwoman Beth Ward.**

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Eugene James.**

**Motion Passed Unanimously.**

Chairman Owens opened the public hearing and called for the first speaker.

### ***Speakers***

Carolyn Glast – stated she has a thirty-year old son who is a CAP-MR (Community Alternative Program for the Mentally Retarded) recipient. She stated that she knows that everyone is cutting back. She stated her son is severely disabled with cerebral palsy, seizures, and physical disabilities but she is proud of his accomplishments because he was not supposed to be here today. Her son was in school and is now homebound. They are working parents and the CAP-MR program was a Godsend for them. Her son needs 24-hour care. She explained that it is cheaper to keep a client at home than have them institutionalized. She questioned the legislators ability to sympathize with the need for these services. She asked the Board to please try to sharpen the cuts from the elderly and handicapped. She spoke of God watching over where the tax dollars are going in the budget. May God bless you leaders that touch people's lives.

Patricia Edwards – stated that raising a child can be joyful and rewarding. She spoke of special needs of children and the joys and worries that go along with those children. She told the Board the story of her having Richard, a child with intervention needs. She shared that they have a family who is devoted to ensure Richard a normal life. She said it has been a struggle to meet his needs because he requires 24-hour care, assistance with feeding, bathing, and dressing. The CAP-MR program has helped to provide some normalcy. She described a typical day with Richard stating that they are helping him with every segment of life. She said she couldn't be a normal mother if the CAP-MR staff didn't come to help. CAP-MR allows her to work beyond the normal hours of teachers to meet her job demands and meet the needs at home. She said the CAP-MR worker becomes part of the family as they assist Richard with his needs and teaching him to become self-sufficient. She said her mission today is to convince the Board of the importance of the CAP-MR program. The program may suffer or be deleted due to the Federal and State funding reductions. She asked the Board for reconsideration of any cuts to the Mental Health budget and stated they were counting on the County's help.

Carlos Murray – stated that he is a Pitt County native and he is speaking on behalf of NAMI or the National Association of the Mentally Ill and he asked the people present to stand if they are with NAMI. He spoke about the shift in Mental Health services being away from State hospitals and back into the local communities which means its important for the County to help. The State is cutting Mental Health by \$1 million. This could mean 300-400 people in this County that will lose services, 20-30 staff members without jobs, higher crime, increased court cases, and higher unemployment. He said the ultimate effect would be an increase in services to be provided by the Sheriff's Department, Detention Center, and Social Services agencies and they will outweigh

the \$300,000 cut in these services. Budget questions are short-term, but the long-term question is how much do we care about these people. The mentally ill people are everywhere in this County. He read a poem about mentally ill people. He appealed for funding for the mentally ill.

Larry Carnes – stated he was the past president of the Chicod Parent Teachers Association and a board member of the Parents for Public Schools and they are against the \$150,000 being charged back to the schools for in-kind for space. He said he saw that the Board has reconsidered this proposal and thanked the Board for changing the budget. During his tenure on the PTA at Chicod Elementary School, he learned a lot about the schools and the ABC's process as it is mandated. He said he believes that the Schools Administration has met and exceeded the requirements for the Education Compact as spelled out. In 2005, the current compact will expire and the County needs to consider the growing need for a new compact. He said progress in the schools can not happen without the funding. He stated that he was concerned about the County using the Hospital Portfolio for things besides education. He said he learned that a resolution had not been done to confirm that these funds are designated for education and encouraged the Board to adopt such a resolution and to set a timeline for replenishing the funds to the Hospital Portfolio. He said he gives of his time as a volunteer but would still prefer the Board to increase his taxes before they consider not funding the schools.

Ann Huggins – stated she is the Chairman of the Social Services Board and Jennifer Smith, the Vice-Chairman was present with her. Ms. Huggins said the Board of Commissioners, in recent past, has been interested in a new building for Social Services. The former manager explored putting a building at the County Office Park. The cost for the new building was a proposed \$10.2 million of which 51.6% would have been reimbursed by the State/Federal government. She stated that she understands there is a tight budget but asked that the Board consider this request as soon as possible. She asked that they fill the vacant positions at the beginning of the new fiscal year. The Social Services Board has serious concerns about what the General Assembly is going to do with the elderly and disabled budgets and that these cuts may be severe. Please contact the legislators on these issues.

Susan Foreman - thanked the Board for working with the Board of Education on the Education Compact and asked that the Board continue to fund the Compact. She stated that the schools touch everyone including the mentally ill and others. The Compact is a model for other areas. Money alone cannot secure the needs in the community. She said she hoped that on the other causes discussed tonight that the Board can work together for Pitt County to be an area of excellence. She thanked the Board.

Nancy Colville – offered some of her own observations concerning the 2002-2003 County Budget noting the function of the County is to assist and provide citizens with health, safety and welfare. She said the funding of a commissioner's favorite non-profit agency should not take preference over funding county government functions. She stated that Greenville did away with funding nonprofits several years ago. She spoke against the Board increasing the Council on Aging's budget by \$15,000 over last year's funding and noted that the County already provides them with a facility. She said many of their services are duplicate services. She questioned if the \$15,000 was really for their requested facility. She asked where the funding for the nonprofits fits into the budget. She spoke about the growth of the County being tied to the University, Hospital and programs that the County offers being an enticement to bring people to the County. How many citizens does it take to pay for one individual's services. She said the \$30 million in reserves is a drop in the bucket for what is needed by the County. She spoke about Commissioners Owens and Johnson being a part of the Hospital transfer transaction three years ago. She stated the Hospital agreed to give the County \$450,000 per year for Medicaid with a and 3% growth cap. This year Medicaid increased 25% alone. The Hospital paid \$80 million for Heritage Hospital, which was small and had less employees. Then she spoke about the increase in hospitalization insurance and how much it would cost the employee that carries family insurance. She said the Board could use the money from the non-profit agencies to cover the increase in health insurance. She also asked why the Schools are getting fines and forfeitures but this amount is

not being deducted from the Education Compact funds. She commented on Dr. Priddy, Schools Superintendent, and his salary. She said the Board is fleecing the County in order to serve special interest groups.

Buck Brossman – said he has lived twelve years in Pitt County and is the parent of a handicapped child. He stated he just wanted to offer support to others previous comments about helping with the funding of Mental Health. He said he has a child in the CAP-MR program and the program has made a gigantic effect on his life. If he did not have this program, he would not be able to work fulltime to pay his bills. They have a high caliber of employees. This program allows CAP-MR clients to be productive people. Please consider funding CAP-MR.

Lauren Oppenheimer - asked to keep those served by Mental Health in the budget. She said Pitt County has a good reputation for caring for those who cannot help themselves. She spoke about the payback of \$600,000 that was done by Mental Health. She said if the programs are cut too much then we will pay for it more in the judicial services and other programs. Every additional dollar spent in prevention saves the taxpayer money. Pitt County has seen an increase in developmentally disabled and mentally ill clients. Mental Health has cut as much as they can from their budgets. Please continue with compassion and be fiscal responsible when funding Mental Health. Mental Health Board members were recognized by Ms. Oppenheimer.

Melba Tripp spoke about the possible reductions in the Pitt County Mental Health Budget. She said she could reiterate the same comments that others have made and she is an advocate for the mentally ill. She asked for all citizens present, in support of Mental Health, to stand so they could be recognized. She stated that because of insufficient funding already, the services are inadequate. She stated that there are 60 citizens waiting for developmental disabilities services, 300 citizens waiting for mental health services, 46 citizens waiting for substance abuse services, and 91 children waiting for mental health or substance abuse services. She asked the Board to keep this in mind when adopting the budget. She said she knows if the money is not there, there is nothing the Board can do but to please consider Mental Health for adequate funding.

Chairman Owens asked if anyone else desires to speak. No one else came forward.

### **Commissioners' Comments**

### **Meeting Notes**

Commissioner Coulson said he asked Dr. Priddy for information on the schools and he would not vote on the money for the schools until he has received this information. He wants the information in order to assure accountability of the schools. He said if a motion is made to approve the budget, he will request that the Board set aside the education funding in the budget until he receives this information. Commissioner Bowen said he would appreciate it if the people here that spoke about the schools would get the message to the School Board and Dr. Priddy.

Commissioner James said he was concerned about \$900,000 being given to Board of Education. He said the funds should go to the classrooms.

Commissioner Bowen asked about Mental Health's budget since there were so many speakers here about the cuts in the Mental Health Budget. Mr. Elliott stated that the original proposed budget did slate a \$300,000 reduction but this had been reduced to \$100,000.

Mr. Elliott said Barry Gaskins, Public Information Officer for Pitt County Schools was in the audience and he could relay Commissioner Coulson's request to Dr. Priddy. Mr. Elliott said he had met with Dr. Priddy and Dr. Priddy stated that the requested information was presented in the fall last year. The next report will be in the fall of this year. Commissioner Coulson said he will not vote on the budget if he has not received the information. Vice Chairwoman Ward asked Commissioner Coulson what he was looking for from the schools. Commissioner Coulson said

the Board received goals for 2005 but the numbers by themselves mean nothing. He said he wants percentages from 1995 and wants to work out statistical analysis to see if goals are being met. Commissioner Shank said when the Board agreed on the Education Compact, several categories have goals to be met but they knew it would not happen within one to two years. She said they would have to wait for the summary after the school year has been completed and those numbers compiled. She questioned the significance of going back to 1995 for information. Commissioner Coulson said he is looking for a base to draw on. He said it is not the intent to say it can be accomplished in one year but there is accountability along the way, not just in 2005. He said he needs to see progress along the way that is statistically significant and looks to the School Board to address these things. Commissioner Coulson said he has asked for simple information. Chairman Owens said when the Board said entered into the Compact they were looking for answers and results and the funding is part of that process. He said they have received statistical information but have been given scores, grades, elevations, but have not reached the 3rd in the State. He said he believes the Board has been given the information and they have complied with the Compact.

Commissioner Johnson asked when the Board is going to consider changes in the Manager's proposed budget. Chairman Owens said they could discuss changes now. Commissioner Bowen asked if the Board was still going to consider the budget at the June 17<sup>th</sup> regular meeting. Commissioner James said the public hearing is for concerns of citizens of Pitt County and the Board can discuss these subjects tomorrow.

#### **Adjourn**

#### **Motion:**

**Motion to recessed the meeting at 8:10 p.m. to reconvene at 4:00 pm on Wednesday to continue budget deliberations.**

**Motion made by Commissioner Eugene James.**

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Glenn Bowen.**

**Motion Passed Unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC  
Clerk to the Board