

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
FEBRUARY 24, 2003 MINUTES**

Joint Meeting
With
Greenville City Council

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met with the Greenville City Council on Monday, February 24, 2003, at 5:30 PM in the Sheppard Memorial Library Conference Room, Greenville, North Carolina.

Commissioners present:

Beth Ward, Chairwoman
Eugene James, Vice Chairman
John Minges, Commissioner
Jimmy Garris, Commissioner
Mark Owens, Jr., Commissioner
Glenn Bowen, Commissioner
Tom Coulson, Commissioner
David Hammond, Commissioner
Randy Royal, Commissioner

Staff present:

D. Scott Elliott, County Manager
Susan J. Banks, Clerk to the Board
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney
John Bulow, Deputy County Manager
Melonie Bryan, Deputy County Manager
Phil Dickerson, Deputy County Manager

Greenville City Council:

Don Parrott, Mayor
Rose Glover, Council member
Pat Dunn, Council member
Ray Craft, Council member
Mildred Council, Council member
Chip Little, Council member
Ric Miller, Council member

Greenville Staff present:

Marvin Davis, City Manager
Wanda Elks, City Clerk
Dave Holec, City Attorney

Call to Order

Agenda for Joint Meeting with City Council

Call to Order - Chairman Ward and Mayor Parrott

Both Chairwoman Ward and Mayor Parrott called their boards to order.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was offered by Commissioner Royal.
The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Council member Miller.

Approval of Agenda - Mayor Parrott and Chairman Ward

Motion:

Motion for Board of Commissioners to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion made by Commissioner Hammond.

Motion seconded by Commissioner James.

Motion passed unanimously.

Motion:

Motion for Greenville City Council to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion made by Council member Dunn.

Motion seconded by Council member Little.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Parrott thanked the members for attending and the opportunity for both boards to meet at this time. He stated the Greenville City Council has a meeting at 7:30 p.m. and would need to finish this meeting prior to that time.

Chairman Ward said that this is the second joint meeting of these boards since she has been on the Board of Commissioners. There was not a problem creating an agenda because there are so many common matters between the City and County. She also thanked the members for their willingness to meet.

Mayor Parrott recognized Wanda Elks, City Clerk, to determine that the City has a quorum. Ms. Wanda Elks stated a quorum of City Council members were present.

Mr. Marvin Davis said both managers would be making presentations. He spoke of the good working relationship with the Manager and the County staff.

Opening Comments/Areas of Mutual Cooperation - Marvin Davis, City Manager, and Scott Elliott, County Manager

- A. Demonstration area in the southwest sewer area
- B. Bethel wastewater treatment
- C. Tax collections
- D. Mutual aid - law enforcement, fire, EMS
- E. Flood recovery
- F. GIS
- F. Other items

Mr. Davis stated that the demonstration area in the southwest sewer area and the Bethel wastewater treatment projects are multi-party agreements with the City and County which have helped areas that were in trouble. The City and County have participated in other long term agreements financially and in other ways that help the environment and the homeowners. Greenville Utilities Commission has been available and taken steps to make things happen in infrastructure. Mr. Davis said these works are for the benefit of the people that we all serve. These agreements are not very old and they have turned out well. Tax collections is another area of cooperation. The City and County sent one tax bill and there is one tax collection staff and location which works well for the taxpayers.

Mr. Elliott said that he believes also that there is a great relationship between the City and the County compared to others cities and counties across North Carolina. He spoke of mutual aid for EMS and the flood recovery where they obviously worked well together. The

County handled all the demolition for the flood and the County provides the geographic information systems tax maps, zoning maps, and works with the City on parcels and data. He spoke about the joint work with Sheppard Memorial Library and the new convention center which was a joint venture where the County has City has taken the project over. He spoke about the collaboration on the reception for Senators Warren and Martin and the good effort of the jurisdictions also coming together with East Carolina University staff. He noted the joint venture of the Humber House and stated that they are working on the disposition of the Humber House. The Metropolitan Planning Organization and transportation issues are also collaborative efforts between the County and municipalities. He said there are a lot of other matters the two agencies work on together.

Update on the 800 mhz Radio Communications - Scott Elliott, County Manager

Mr. Elliott reported on the E911 Surcharge Fees. Pitt County introduced a local bill and it was turned into a statewide bill for the expanded use the E911 surcharge fees. The State was supposed to report on this bill in 2002 but it was not acted on in that fiscal year.

Mr. Elliott stated that the proposed NCACC Legislative Priority for 2003-2004 is as follows:

“ Seek legislation to increase flexibility in the use of fees generated for the Emergency Telephone System (E911) in order to expand the ability of counties to use these funds for purchase or lease of any and all communication equipment associated with receiving, processing or dispatching emergency calls for law enforcement, fire, medical, rescue or other public safety services, to include more effective use of Emergency 911 services through funding of E911 services.”

He stated the purpose was a request for the expansion of the use of those fees. Staff is working with local delegation to get this bill re-introduced in this legislative session and debating whether it should be a local or statewide bill. The bill is not being favored because the lobbies of the telephone companies are very influential to the general assembly. Ms. Burgdorff said the local delegation says that the counties should lobby for this bill. The phone companies do not want the counties to use those dollars. Mr. Elliott said the funds could possibly be considered for Homeland Security, if this bill does not get approved. Dave Holec said this is also one of the City Council's legislative goals. It will take some work to get this bill passed this time. Commissioner James said it is the telephone bill that the telephone companies are worried about and if it is opened up like this the fee could go as high as \$2.00 per month. Commissioner James said he would like to see this fee cut but it may go further if a cap is not put on the proposed legislation.

Mr. Davis said the 800mhz would benefit the City as well as the County and they do support it because they need it also. Ms. Dunn said that one of the issues of the flood was the inability for the City to communicate with the County. Chairman Ward said once this is passed it could be a countywide communications system. Ms. Burgdorff said the phone companies did agree to a cap and an administrative fee but they want to control a percentage of the funds that the County could be used for communications. Chairman Ward said some counties are using these funds and just hope they do not have a problem. Mr. Elliott said that Pitt County is trying to be cautious on this issue. She said this fund would benefit all of County citizens including the municipalities. Vice Chairman Bowen asked if the \$11.2 million estimate included the municipalities. Mr. Elliott said that was a dated figure that has changed but it does include the municipalities. Commissioner Minges asked how much was in the fund and stated that the 800mhz may not be the system that is needed by the time this is approved. Ms. Bryan said \$200,000 was in the fund. Mr. Miller asked what committee this bill was sent to for study. Ms. Burgdorff said the Telephone Communications Committee. Commissioner Hammond said the counties sued the State last year for the withholding of the reimbursement funds. The discussion was centered around the different uses of these funds from county to county. Commissioner Coulson asked what was the most efficient way to raise this money. He asked why the administrative fee should go to the phone company. He said it would be a nightmare for the

phone companies to keep up the different fee rates from one county to the next. The phone companies have to answer all the questions. Commissioner Hammond spoke about the complexity of phone bills and bank statements. Commissioner Owens suggested the county do its own local bill since there was no success on the statewide effort. Chairman Ward asked staff to explain how this fee was initiated. Ms. Burgdorff said it was started for a system where the 911 staff could punch in the person's phone number and the actual location of the person making the emergency call could be identified. The phone companies thought this was a fee that was going to be used for that project and then the fee would be eliminated. Commissioner James said part of this fee was also used for the County's block addressing program. Chairman Ward said the Board of Commissioners discussed with the local delegation the possibility of this being presented again as a local bill.

Payments for Covering the County's Rescue (EMS) Area - Marvin Davis, City Manager

Mr. Davis said the City started providing rescue services about thirty years ago. The City has covered a portion of County residents in a district which extends towards Pactolus, out Highway 903 to Highway 11, over to Blue Banks subdivision, to Rock Springs, and around to Highway 264 which is a rather large area for the Greenville EMS to serve for the County. Mr. Davis stated that the County has moved forward with EMS over the last year. Over the past few years, the service has been looked at as doing something they needed to do for the County. When the County established the new EMS fee, the City was in the middle of building a new fire station. They built an additional fire station and felt this was the time to reconsider the funding for their services. Mr. Davis said their concern is equity in the funds for rescue services in the County. When EMS districts were making presentations, the City did not have an opportunity to present their financial needs for the districts which the City serves. In hindsight, this may not have been the better way for the City to go through this process. The City would like to present what they feel are the costs for servicing the areas in the County. The number of calls were from 1100-1200 calls per year. The City does bill the individual for rescue calls. Mr. Davis said \$86,500 was appropriated from the County for this district and \$124,000 was received from rescue calls. He said that a lot of rescue departments are receiving \$300,000+ from the County. With 24/7 coverage and the level of response they are providing with three paramedics per call, and an average response time of six minutes, they feel they are providing quality service in this area of Pitt County. The situation comes down to equity and would like to be fairly considered like other units. The City is being pulled in numerous areas because of funding needs. He said they are torn in ways of where and how to provide services.

Mr. Davis said they are concerned about the revenue needed from the County to serve this district. He spoke of comparable services. He said they wanted to share their concerns at an early time so as they moves towards the new fiscal year, they will be talking to the appropriate staff. Commissioner Hammond said in 2001-02 a tax .065 was levied for EMS in the City plus they are receiving the \$330 rate per call plus some additional fees. Mr. Davis said they are serving one district for the County and providing mutual aid, as they all do for each other. He said this district is way beyond the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction. Mr. Elliott said this was the first year that they put the EMS tax in place and funding the rescue squads. The tax does not totally fund the County squads. He said the County EMS Advisory Committee is currently working on two projects. One is a report to State on the Emergency Management Services plan and the second one is moving forward on the second phase of the EMS study. The study is for the consultant to analyze the locations of the existing rescue stations and determine if they are in the best location or if they need to relocate some of the stations. They will also be looking at the service areas that the City covers. He said the ultimate goal is to get the service to pay for itself. There will be a change in the delivery of service. Vice Chairman Bowen said the County calls charge \$400. He wished that the County and City charged the same amounts. Mr. Davis said the City charges \$330 plus a \$40 or \$50 fee. The County gives the City \$86,000 of the tax funds. Vice Chairman Bowen asked if they have figured what the .03 tax would give them in those areas. Mr. Davis said they have not gotten that far in their research. Chairman Ward said if they listened to Mr. Elliott they would know that this was getting ready to change. Commissioner

Hammond said 28-32% of the volunteers quit when the County took over the rescue services and this had hurt the County. Commissioner Coulson asked what Mr. Davis considered a fair amount for the City to provide rescue services in the area they are covering for the County. Mayor Parrott said they would like to have EMS at every station in the City. He said currently they have one station outside the City limits has a paramedic and they have one station in the City limits that does not have a paramedic because they cannot afford to put them there. Mr. Elliott stated that the County gives the City \$86,000 from the tax funds and the City collects \$124,000 in calls for the area they cover for the County.

Commissioner Owens thanked the City for providing the rescue services for the County. He encouraged the two managers to continue to work towards the goal. Commissioner Royal said it sounds like the City is providing the County services and the County is not paying for the service. Commissioner James said he wants to be in the Greenville rescue district and we need to look at how to serve the entire County. He said there has to be reorganization. The residents need to be served equally.

Update on Tax Collection Efforts by the County - Scott Elliott, County Manager

Mr. Elliott reported on the Tax Collection Efforts which includes:

Coordination

- Annual meeting for review among agencies
- Collaborate for key collection information
- "tax collection review" produced semiannually

Delinquent Collection Efforts

- A. Wage Garnishments
- B. Bank/Rent Attachments
- C. State Clearinghouse Participation
- D. Sheriff's Execution
- E. Courtesy Letter from Legal
- F. In Rem Foreclosure

Mr. Elliott presented a written report. Mr. Little asked how far back the County goes on foreclosures. Ms. Burgdorff stated that they started implementing foreclosures on ten year delinquent accounts. They are now down to three to five year list but most of those are small accounts. The staff looks at the accounts to see which ones generate the most revenue. Mr. Elliott said it would be helpful if the County could use the utilities to track these accounts. Commissioner Hammond asked about the tax rate. Mr. Elliott state that the tax rate for Pitt County is \$.68 cents plus the .03 cents EMS district tax. The City residents make up around 52% of the County.

Ms. Glover asked what the amounts were for foreclosures that generate revenue. Ms. Burgdorff said in the beginning they had bills around \$10,000 and now it may be \$4,000 to \$5,000.

Commissioner Minges asked if any counties outsource the foreclosure procedures. Ms. Burgdorff said the law allows the counties to move quicker because a private attorney would have to notify everyone near the property but the County is not required to do so. She said that Pitt County staff does real well with this process. She said there are only 15-20 counties in the State that do the procedure the way that it is done in Pitt County. Ms. Burgdorff said the County must have someone dedicated to provide this service. Over time, there are a lot of property problems that have to be corrected along the way and it helps with the clean up of real estate problems in the County. Mayor Parrot thanked the County for this aggressive work on foreclosures for the City also. Chairman Ward said this has been one of this Board's goals.

County Financial Participation in the Recreation and Parks Programs - Marvin Davis, City Manager

Mayor Parrott requested that this section be postponed for a later date and everyone agreed.

Update on County Revaluation Process - Scott Elliott, County Manager

Chairman Ward said the County is in the middle of the revaluation process and asked the County Manager to report to the boards.

Mr. Elliott gave the following highlights about the County's revaluation process:

- Effective January 1, 2004
- Impacts Budget for FY 04-05
- Taxpayer Billing Aug 2004—Due January 2005
- 50% Complete (Most of Rural Pitt County)
- Starting "Residential Corridor"
 - March 2003- Sept 2003

- Public Education Campaign
 - Pitt TV
 - Connected to Pitt County Page
 - County Web Site – Top 10 Questions about Reval
 - Community Presentations

- Change in Value Notices
(Distributed Last Quarter 2003)

- Appeal Avenues
 - Informal Hearings
 - Pitt County Board of Equalization and Review
 - Property Tax Commission (NC Dept of Revenue)

- Reasons to Appeal
 - Assessed value substantially exceeds the market value
 - Assessed inequitably related to comparable properties

- Why not to Appeal
 - You consider percentage of increase over previous assessment oo much
 - You cannot afford to pay the tax bill

Chairman Ward said the County is trying to educate people so this will not come as a surprise to the citizens. Staff will make presentations to groups as requested. Mr. Elliott stated that they had already been contact by Rotary, Town of Farmville, Town of Bethel to make a presentation.

Cooperation for Uptown Revitalization - Marvin Davis, City Manager

Mayor Parrott said the City Council would like to bring to the County's attention the uptown revitalization project. He said that the more private investment that can be given to the uptown/downtown area, the better they will be able to make the area. He asked that the County consider being in a partnership, not necessarily in funds, but in ideas and suggestions for how to improve this area. They are looking at expanding the area a thoroughfare is planned to help

bring people to this area. He said they are working on a plan to request funding for the project. They are also meeting with the schools to request their assistance also. He said if the County could put an office building downtown it would bring people to the downtown area. He restaurants would also improve the area. He asked that the commissioners to think about what the County could do to improve the area because this would help the City of Greenville and the County of Pitt.

Commissioner Hammond asked about the grant used to rehabilitate South Evans Street. Mr. Davis said they were matching grants for homeowners.

Commissioner Owens said he appreciated the Mayor's comments about what is needed to improve the downtown area. He reminded everyone that the County has just invested \$15-\$20 million in renovations and expansion of the County Courthouse which is in the downtown area of Greenville. He said this was a good start for the County to help with the improvements downtown. Mayor Parrott agreed and stated if the City can help by providing parking, land or development in the downtown area, to let them know what could be done.

Commissioner Hammond asked if Mayor Parrott was indicating that the University was considering moving into the downtown area, noting that the University does not have to pay property taxes. Mayor Parrott stated that the County Office building is located where the Hospital could be interested in the property and if PCMH bought the building, and the County wanted to locate an office building in the downtown area, the City would like to help or encourage the County to locate buildings or offices in the downtown area. In talking with Chancellor Muse of East Carolina University, he said their plans are to move towards the downtown area because they cannot move in other directions. He said even though they do not pay property taxes, they do provide a lot of jobs to this area. Commissioner Bowen said all the municipalities are having problems financially and the County needs to treat the municipalities fairly. Mayor Parrott said the City has hired a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. to see if they can get some assistance and support. He said the City Council wanted to inform the Board of Commissioners of what they are doing with the downtown area and would like for them to be a part of this project.

Chairman Ward said the thoroughfare including the hospital, City and ECU to the university and downtown area could bring opportunities to this area.

Commissioner James said the Greene Street Bridge which now has a straight shot to downtown Greenville. He said the problem is getting people to come into downtown Greenville from the Fire Tower Road area.

Adjournment - Chairman Ward and Mayor Parrott

Chairman Ward and Mayor Parrott adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC
Clerk to the Board