

The Honorable Board of County Commissioners met in their said office at 10:00 a.m., March 7, 1977, it being first Monday.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PRESENT:

C. Waldo Marlowe, Chairman

Junior W. Dew, Vice-Chairman

Edward W. Williamson

L. A. Hinson

David L. McPherson

James E. Hill, Jr., Attorney (Part-time) Emogene W. Suggs, Clerk

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman and the invocation was given by The Reverend Tommy Beaver, Christ the King Luthern Church, Whiteville.

The following business was transacted:

A motion was made by Commissioner Dew, seconded by Commissioner McPherson and passed to approve the minutes of the February 21st meeting as recorded.

Jimmy Godwin, Chief Court Counselor for Juveniles, met with the Board to discuss the preliminary report on Youth Needs for the County. He requested the Board to replace two members of the Study Task Force for non-attendance. He further suggested persons for the replacements. A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner Hinson to appoint Peter F. Coletti and Bill Morrison to replace William McNeill and Milton Roof to serve on the Task Force at the recommendation of Mr. Godwin. The motion was passed. It was further decided that Mr. Godwin be allowed to recruit persons to serve on sub-committees to have a greater input from county citizens but not as voting members of the Task Force.

Mr. Donnie Graham, Member of Area Mental Health Board, made a request that the Board approve the following questions being sent to Dr. Sarah Morrow, Secretary, Department of Human Resources, by the Clerk to the Board and request a reply from her:

1. That our County Commissioners send a letter to Dr. Sarah Morrow, requesting that she choose an auditor to audit the Southeastern Regional Mental Health Budgets of 1976-77.
2. That the analysis show a complete breakdown of the budgets and services of Columbus County.
3. That the analysis of the budgets show a breakdown of the total amount of equipment (furniture, film library and others) purchased by the (4) four county shared money.
4. That an analysis of approximate, \$740,000 reserve fund, be held by Southeastern Region, and made known as to what sources did this money come from.
5. That it be made clear as to what part of this money belongs to Columbus County, and can this money (\$740,000) be held in tack until the Columbus County Board of Commissioners and the Columbus County Advisory Board Members be satisfied with the total audit.

Would you make it known in a written statement that concerned citizens of Columbus County would be very appreciative if the audit is completed by April 1, 1977?"

A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson, seconded by Commissioner Hinson and approved that the questions be submitted to Dr. Marrow except that item one be changed to use the present audit which was prepared by S. Preston Douglas, Associates, CPA, of Lumberton.

This change was agreeable with Mr. Graham. Commissioner Hinson requested the audit be reviewed very closely.

A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner Hinson and approved to allow the Dept. of Social Services to reclassify the following employees due to a change in their duties and responsibilities: Peggy M. Duncan, Peggy P. Duncan, Kathryn Worrell, Rose Langston, and Linda P. Baldwin.

A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner Hinson and approved for Lacy R. Thompson, Clerk of Court, James E. Hill, Jr., County Attorney and Helma English, Social Worker to attend the workshop in Florida concerning IV-D Program. The County will be responsible for the travel expenses for the Workshop.

A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson, seconded by Commissioner Hinson and approved to allow Social Services Director, Joanne Vereen to sign the public assistance checks written by the Department of Social Services as Deputy Finance Officer. (Must have bond to County Finance Officer)

A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner McPherson, and passed to approve the following tax releases as recommended by the Tax Supervisor:

Ordered: that the 1968 taxes listed in the name of James Alvin Smith, Whiteville Township, be releases on the valuation of \$970. due to an auto being double listed.

Ordered: that the 1976 taxes listed in the name of Dennis Sellers, Whiteville Township, be released on the valuation of \$2875. This release is from the late listing and Mr. Sellers had listed this property on the regular listing.

Ordered: that a refund be made to Shirley Rockwell Spivey (Williams), Route 1, Box 144, Tabor City, N. C., South Williams Township, in the amount of \$7.20 for 1976 taxes. Property was double listed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner McPherson and approved to set the time for Equalization & Review on April 5th, 12th and 19th to begin at 9:00 A.M.

A letter was read to the Board from Eloise Byrd, Chairman, County Manager Study Committee, stating the results of the vote taken by the Committee for a recommendation to the Board concerning the county manager form of government. The following is the report to the Board by letter from Mrs. Byrd:

"The Study Committee has met several times concerning the feasibility of hiring a county manager. After much discussion, careful consideration, canvassing our communities and hearing Mr. Frank Lewis from Raleigh, a member of the County Commissioners Association, we have decided that it would not be to the County's best interest to recommend employment of a county manager at this time. The voting was as follows: eleven against recommendation three in favor of recommendation; two abstained from voting."

A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson, seconded by Commissioner Dew, and passed by a majority vote to accept the recommendation of the Study Committee not to hire a county manager. Commissioner Hinson voted not to accept the recommendation of the Committee, all other members voting favorable.

A letter was read to the Board retracting her resignation as Library Director and asked to continue work at the Library due to the indefinite postponement of her marriage. The Board accepted her request by motion of Commissioner Dew and seconded by Commissioner Williamson.

A report was presented to the Board from the Department of Labor with instructions to make necessary repairs to the boiler in the Courthouse Annex. A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner McPherson and passed to replace the boiler as soon as the weather is favorable in view of the high cost of repair to the present boiler. The Clerk was instructed to contact the Bureau of Inspections and notify them of this action and ask permission to continue the use of the present boiler without repairs until the new one can be installed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Williamson, seconded by Commissioner Dew and passed to contact the Department of Transportation immediately and ask their assistance in repairing the driveway at the Law Enforcement Center and County Hall as there are several large holes in the driveway due to adverse weather conditions this winter. The Board directed Commissioner Williamson to contact the Department, but in the meantime he could purchase asphalt and use personnel at the landfill to make temporary repairs.

A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson, seconded by Commissioner Williamson and passed to reaffirm the existing policy that the Tax Collector not accept any partial payments on personal property.

Information was relayed to the Board by the Clerk concerning the CETA Title IV Program. It was stated that the most funds the County could expect to receive under the present Program would be to fund the number of employees who were working on June 30, 1976 through September 31st. This is approximately 40 persons less than now enrolled. Presently funds that are committed to the County would end employment about mid-April. The Board agreed that any employee under Title VI who quits for any reason not be replaced and all remaining employees work until the funds are exhausted. Further discussions related to the proposed project Title VI Program which will become effective in the near future. The Board tentatively adopted the State priorities list for projects until further information is available.

There was a discussion concerning the use of space at the old hospital when it becomes available. A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson, seconded by Commissioner Williamson and passed that the Chairman contact Dr. Paschal and ask if he will accept the responsibility of making a study of the best use of space in the hospital in relation to the number of rooms that are needed by Social Services, Health Department and Mental Health Department with the assistance of Commissioner Williamson and Chairman Marlowe.

A letter was presented to the Board from the Public Safety Commission requesting confirmation that the Board would appropriate funds to purchase eight new autos for the County Police in the 1977-78 FY. The Board instructed the Attorney to look into the possibility of purchasing autos through State contract and report to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Clifford Pierce, Hallsboro, discussed the case of his severely retarded daughter, Neresa, with the Board. He stated that he had been unable to have her admitted to O'Berry Center except for a six month period. He stated that he was told that her confinement would be of no

cost to him because of his income level. He was billed for the services and has been paying small amounts as he could.

A motion was made by Commissioner McPherson that the Clerk write a letter to Dr. Douglas (copy to Ms. Covington) asking that the Pierce case be evaluated and if it is determined this individual should be in a facility for care that they respond to the need. The motion was seconded Commissioner Hinson and approved at the request of Mr. Pierce. It was further ordered that the bill be investigated and taken off his record as this was not the information given him when his daughter was admitted to O'Berry for the six months period.

A group of members of the Columbus County Branch of NAACP, with A. Julius Smith as spokesman, met with the Board and presented the following letter for consideration:

"The Columbus County Branch NAACP, through its Executive Committee, wishes to ask that you Gentlemen, duly elected by the voters of Columbus County, in the interest of justice and fair play to all of the people of this Great County, exercise your sworn duty to them, the citizens of Columbus County, take whatever steps required to cause the contract with the Columbus County Hospital Board of Control to become null and void, and that you Gentlemen appoint a Board that will work to have Columbus County Hospital serve the needs of the people of Columbus County.

We wish to sight the following reasons for this request:

1. The lack of the present Hospital Board of Control to provide space for mental health care, even though mental health is as much of a disease as pneumonia or a broken leg.
2. We do not feel that the Board is doing enough to encourage new doctors to settle in Columbus County.
3. No female representation on said Board, even though females represent more than fifty per cent of the total population.
4. We feel that a TEN MILLION DOLLAR investment by the people of Columbus County should be regulated by elected officials.
5. We believe that a large number of the citizens of Columbus County who voted for the Hospital Bond would have voted against the same Bond, had they known that the Hospital would be leased to a private corporation. "

The following is a statement presented to the Board by William McNeill representing The Columbus County Civic League:

"Because we feel the tight-fisted control over Columbus County Hospital, exerted by its Board of Directors, creates a climate that deprives the County's citizens of rights and privileges that are theirs by virtue of their status as taxpayers--

Because we are aware the Hospital is a public county facility run largely with public funds which become a part of the treasury of an exclusive private group--

Because we feel the County's citizens should have more of a say in how their taxes are spent--

Because we feel the Board, in its composition, discriminates against minorities, (our Indian brothers and sisters) and women--

We urge the following:

(a) That the Commissioners proceed immediately to abolish the present agreement the County has with the Columbus County Hospital Board and establish a new system that will return the hospital to the citizens of Columbus County.

(b) As we strongly support the valiant fight Commissioner Hinson is waging for the establish-

ing of a county mental health program, that the Commissioners press forward in securing a portion of the old facility for mental health purposes.

(c) That the composition of the new hospital board be representative of women and of all the ethnic groups (blacks, whites, Indians) in our County.

(d) No member be elected for life, but for a number of years, after which he or she may be re-elected or replaced.."

The Board advised the groups that they would give their request serious consideration.

Claude Spivey advised the Board that he felt the Hospital was not up to "par" and was not operated in the best interest of the people of the County and the Board should revoke the present contract with the Board of Trustees. He was also advised that the Board would pursue his complaint that he was refused treatment at the emergency room on the preceeding week-end.

Omega Simmons, Rt. 4, Whiteville, requested the Board for any assistance they could render to furnish a county policeman in his neighborhood and suggested that Carl Hinson be selected. The Board referred him to the Public Safety Commission as they have the legal right to operate the county police system and County Commissioners have no authority to hire persons employed as county police.

Mrs. Beatrice Smith, Member of the County Manager Study Committee, asked permission to address the Board to refute the statement in the News Reporter that no member of the Study Committee visited any other county to study the county manager form of government. Mrs. Smith stated she visited other counties, talked with citizens in her respective zone and felt that she was qualified to make a decision concerning the hiring of a county manager. She stated she would challenge anyone who says the committee did not function properly. Her reason for voting against the manager system was the people in the County are not ready and willing to accept the manager form of government.

County Attorney Hill reviewed the General Statutes on public meeting laws as they apply to the Board of Commissioners as a matter of clarification to the Board.

Upon motion the meeting adjourned until March 21, 1977, at 10:00 a.m.

APPROVED:

Emogene W. Suggs
Clerk

Waldo Marlowe
Chairman