

COLUMBUS COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES

The Honorable Board of Columbus County Commissioners met in their said office at 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, NC at 6:00 P.M., June 6, 2001 to resume a Board Meeting that was recessed on June 4, 2001.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Spruell R. Britt, Chairman

Sammie Jacobs, Vice Chairman

David L. Dutton, Jr.

Amon E. McKenzie

Bill Memory

Lynwood Norris

C.E. Wilson

James E. Hill, Jr., County Attorney

John E. Whitehurst
Interim County Administrator

Ida L. Smith
Clerk to Board

BOARD MEETING RESUMED

Chairman Britt called the Board Meeting back to order and stated we are here to meet with the education leaders in the County representing Columbus County and Whiteville City Schools and Southeastern Community College regarding the fifteen percent (15%) reduction in Current Expense in the 2001-2002 Columbus County Proposed Operating Budget.

Chairman Britt announced that anyone wishing to speak would be allowed to do so.

The following persons spoke regarding their educational concerns for their respective school facility.

1. **Southeastern Community College: Dr. Brantley Briley, President, stated his concerns as follows:**

- A. We are gravely concerned as for the past several years we have been asked to do more with less and SCC is now feeling the strain. We stand to face a cut of \$163,000.
 - B. A fifteen percent (15%) percent cut in local funding for SCC would have the deepest impact on the efficiency of the school's operation and the appearance of the campus.
 - C. We could stand to lose some positions which would be in custodial and grounds maintenance.
 - D. We were considering entering into an energy savings contract and one of the stipulations was the savings will not result in a decrease in funding. Special legislation allows institutions such as SCC to borrow low-interest funds to upgrade lighting and air conditioning/heating systems and are repaid with the savings realized through cost efficient heating, cooling and lighting systems.
2. **Southeastern Community College: Lonnie Fox, Vice President of Operations and Finance, stated his concerns as follows:**
- A. The college has to prepare for accreditation and losing a custodian and grounds worker will be taking a step backwards.
 - B. SCC plays an important role in Economic Development.
 - C. We plan to do major renovations with bond money but once the renovations are made we will not have funds to operate a new facility.
3. **Southeastern Community College: Rhone Sasser, Chairman of the Board of Directors stated his concerns:**
- A. Southeastern Community College is one of top performing community colleges in the state, we have an excellent track record. We are above the state average in the number of transfers to universities.
 - B. Forty percent (40%) of the county high school seniors attend Southeastern Community College.
 - C. Columbus County has lost approximately 2,500 jobs within the last two

(2) years and SCC has trained all of those persons who desire to become actively employed in another trade with the help of the Employment Security Commission.

4. Columbus County Schools: Thomas Nance, Superintendent, stated the following concerns:

- A. If our budget is reduced by fifteen percent (15%) we will step back to the level of funding in 1996.
- B. If we lose our level of funding from the County, we stand to lose \$341,000 in low wealth monies.
- C. Mr. Nance reported that several programs will be cut including six (6) positions, one (1) director's salary who has chose to accept employment with the Whiteville School System, Job Ready, and will lose three (3) positions in Community Based Alternatives. Also, other items will be reduced such as: instructional supplies, arts/band, athletic salaries, office supplies, office expense, principal's travel, in-service training, public utilities and all maintenance supplies.
- D. Junior varsity sports will be cut, along with track, soccer, tennis and golf.

5. Columbus County Schools: Ricky Bullard, Chairman of the Columbus County Board of Education, stated the following concerns:

- A. In cutting the schools' budget, we are allowing our children to miss the opportunity to receive a good education.
- B. With this type of cut in the budget, we are taking a step back in time.

6. Whiteville City Schools: LaDeen Powell, Chairman of the Whiteville City Schools' Board of Education, stated the following concerns:

- A. I would like to make a plea for the future of our children. In reducing the budget, we can not afford to pay the salaries and supplements to attract qualified teachers. We have to compete with other counties which is very difficult.

- B. Please reconsider a tax increase to help with funding the budget as we do not want to see our children suffer.
7. **Whiteville City Schools: James Prevatte, Co-Interim Superintendent, stated the following concerns:**
- A. We have cut all the fluff from our budget and can probably live with the fifteen percent (15%), but we can not cut anymore. We have cut supplements, and we are losing our junior varsity athletics and the JROTC program will be cut by two (2) months.
- B. Due to the cut in the funding, we will lose an additional \$80,000 in low-wealth funding from the State.
8. **Whiteville City Schools: Sharon Penny, Finance Director, stated the following concerns:**
- A. The fifteen percent (15%) reduction in the budget, we can live with but we are requesting that you consider funding the schools at the same level as last year.
- B. Ms. Penny stated that most surrounding counties are receiving increases in their budgets, not decreases.
9. **Whiteville City Schools: Coleman Barbour, Co-Interim Superintendent, stated the following concerns:**
- A. The fifteen percent (15%) reduction is going to be very difficult to operate with. Mr. Barbour stated if you will fund the schools properly, we will provide you with educated children. We have had many high school graduates to earn scholarships to major universities.
- B. Please consider the children are our future and help them to have the opportunity for a good education so that one day they can come back and help make this county prosperous.

There were no further comments.

MEETING RECESSED TO WATER & SEWER DISTRICT V AUTHORITY MEETING

At 7:40 P.M., a motion was made by Commissioner Norris, seconded by Commissioner Jacobs and passed unanimously to recess the regular Board Meeting to act as the Columbus County Water & Sewer District Authority for Water and Sewer District V.

ADJOURN WATER & SEWER DISTRICT V WATER AUTHORITY MEETING

At 8:00 P.M., a motion was made by Commissioner Jacobs, seconded by Commissioner Norris and passed unanimously to adjourn the Columbus County Water & Sewer Authority V Meeting and resume regular session.

The Minutes of the Water & Sewer District V Authority Meeting are recorded in the Water & Sewer District V Minute Book.

RESUME REGULAR SESSION

Immediately, thereafter, Chairman Britt called the regular Board Meeting back to order.

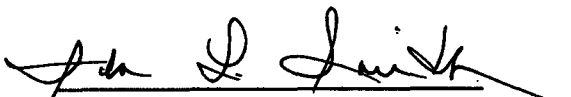
SHERIFF - 2001-2002 BUDGET CONCERNS

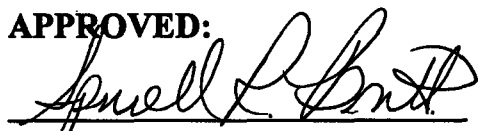
Jimmy Ferguson, Sheriff, addressed the Board regarding the 2001-2002 Proposed Operating Budget stating his concerns regarding the five (5) COPS Grant positions (patrol deputies) that were eliminated from the budget as the grant will expire effective June 30, 2001.

Sheriff Ferguson requested the Board to consider to fund these positions as we need the additional five patrol deputies as we have 54,000 citizens in the third largest county in the state. If these positions are eliminated, there is a possibility that some of the citizens will go lacking for assistance in a time of need.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:10 P.M., a motion was made by Commissioner Dutton, seconded by Commissioner Norris and passed unanimously to adjourn the Board Meeting.


Ida L. Smith, Clerk to Board

APPROVED:

Spruell R. Britt, Chairman

