

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING and SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

June 20, 2006

7:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time in the Bolton Fire Department, 225 9th Street, Bolton, North Carolina 28423, for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing, and a Special Called Meeting, both of which was duly advertised.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Kipling Godwin, **Chairman**
Amon E. McKenzie
James E. Prevatte
Sammie Jacobs
Bill Memory (Arrived 7:17 P.M.)
Lynwood Norris

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Jimmy Varner, **Interim County Manager**
Steven W. Fowler, **County Attorney**
June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

David L. Dutton, Jr., **Vice Chairman**

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

Roxanne Coleman, **Finance Officer**

7:00 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING:

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED to ORDER:

At 7:00 P.M., Chairman Godwin called the duly advertised Public Hearing to order, and stated the purpose of this hearing was to receive comments, either oral or written, from anyone, regarding the increase in the Bolton Fire District Tax from six (\$.06) cents to ten (\$.10) cents, per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.00) dollars property valuation. Chairman Godwin requested Steven W. Fowler, Columbus County Attorney, to inform the citizens of how this Public Hearing would be conducted. Mr. Fowler read the Policy on Comments at Public Hearings.

OVERVIEW from CHIEF MIKE DIXON:

Chairman Godwin requested that Chief Mike Dixon give an overview of this request for an increase. Chief Dixon stated the following:

1. The main reason for requesting this increase is that we originally started this district with a six (\$.06) cents tax rate and have never requested an increase;
2. No new equipment has been bought since 1984;
3. Since 1984, we have bought a used tanker for sixty-eight thousand and 00/100 (\$68,000.00) dollars;
4. The cost of insurance on our equipment and fuel have increased greatly;
5. On Memorial Day weekend, we responded to eight (8) calls, which took a lot of fuel;
6. We need to finish two (2) more fire hydrants to get an insurance rating of seven (7);
7. With only five thousand and 00/100 (\$5,000) dollars, we can't pay the insurance on our trucks;
8. We try to protect and serve the public as best we can with what we have to work with;
9. We have been in service for thirty-four (34) years; **and**
10. If we cannot generate some more money, this department will be forced to take certain equipment out of operation, which will ultimately hurt the citizens.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chairman Godwin opened the floor for comments, either written or oral, from anyone who wanted to make them. The following people spoke:

1. **Martha Holmes:** I had questions when I came here, but you have answered all of them but one, and that is, will it include the surrounding areas. Chief Dixon replied stating it would go out six (6) miles.

2. **Billy Long:** stated the following:
 - A. On the fire hydrants you mentioned that needed to be numbered;
 - B. We have good people in this town and some young people who can do a good job in getting these fire hydrants numbered, either painted or stamped, and we should get them involved; **and**
 - C. We should have a meeting every so often to discuss problems like this so everyone in the area will know what is going on.

3. **Lisa Godwin:** stated the following:
 - A. I would like to know why there is such a long time delay in responding to a fire call;
 - B. By the time the fire department gets to my place, I could have the fire put out myself; **and**
 - C. We need a person on duty at all times.

4. **Lucille R. Schlicht:** stated the following:
 - A. This town is a disgrace;
 - B. The area where I live needs to be cleaned up;
 - C. Large fuel tanks are close by which could easily become a fire hazard; **and**
 - D. You need to have cookouts to raise money.

5. **Melvin Brown:** stated the following:
 - A. I have been dealing with this fire department for over forty (40) years;
 - B. This department is utilizing their budget very wisely;
 - C. The two (2) issues we have before is tonight are, we can choose to increase the tax and get better services, or, we can choose to leave the tax the same and settle with less services; **and**
 - D. We all need to remember that this is a volunteer department and the response time will be longer than a department with paid personnel on board.

6. **Donald Dowless:** stated the following:
 - A. I have served on the Board of Directors for this fire department;
 - B. I know what sacrifices the fire department members make in fulfilling their positions;
 - C. I am familiar with the increased expenses in keeping this fire department operating;
 - D. I live on a fixed income, and if I can make the sacrifice for this tax increase, then the majority of the other people can too; **and**
 - E. I suggest that we meet on a quarterly basis to keep everyone abreast of what is going on.

7. **Odell McKeithan:** stated the following:
 - A. I think we should consider what we have and what we are getting for this increase;
 - B. I am a volunteer;
 - C. I live on a fixed income; **and**
 - D. This department answers more wreck calls than fire calls.

CONCLUSION:

Chairman Godwin stated he had reviewed the last three (3) audits for this department and could easily see the financial status, and the need for a tax increase.

A straw poll vote was taken with the following results:

AYES: 21
NAYS: 2

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:

At 7:35 P.M., Chairman Godwin closed the Public Hearing.

7:37 P.M.

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING:

MEETING CALLED to ORDER:

At 7:37 P.M., Chairman Godwin called the Special Called Meeting to order.

BOLTON FIRE DEPARTMENT - INCREASE in SPECIAL FIRE DISTRICT TAX:

Chairman Godwin stated that at the request of Chief Mike Dixon, Bolton Fire Department, a duly called and advertised Public Hearing was held at 7:00 P.M., on this date. After all comments were heard, a straw poll vote was taken, with twenty-six (26) private citizens in attendance. There were twenty-one (21) votes for the increase in the special fire district tax, and two (2) votes against the special fire district tax. The Board of Commissioners needs to approve, or disapprove, the increase from six (\$.06) cents to ten (\$.10) cents, per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.000 dollars property valuation.

MOTION:

Commissioner McKenzie made a motion to approve the increase in the special fire district tax for Bolton Fire Department from six (\$.06) cents to ten (\$.10) cents, per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.00) dollars property valuation. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Jacobs, and unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:39 P.M., Commissioner Jacobs made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Prevatte. The motion unanimously carried.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

KIPLING GODWIN, Chairman