

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Informational Meeting
Thursday, April 4, 2002
7:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex Building located at 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina for the purpose of holding an informational meeting with local Rescue and Fire Department Chiefs to discuss the use of the two (\$.02) cents district tax.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Amon E. McKenzie, **Chairman**
 C.E. "Gene" Wilson, **Vice Chairman**
 Spruell R. Britt
 David L. Dutton, Jr.
 Sammie Jacobs
 Bill Memory
 Lynwood Norris

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

James E. Hill, Jr., **County Attorney**
 Darren L. Currie, **Assistant County Administrator**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Administrator**

CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:00 P.M., Chairman Amon E. McKenzie called the meeting to order. The invocation was delivered by the same. All in attendance stood and pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

COMMENTS from RESCUE/FIRE CHIEFS

Chairman McKenzie stated the purpose of this meeting is to hear the concerns the rescue/fire chiefs have regarding the usage of the two (\$.02) cents rescue district tax. He stated that anyone wishing to speak, please stand and state their name for the record. The comments were as follows.

1. **Kenneth Sasser (Hallsboro Fire Chief):** we are a small department and need as much help as we can get. In the distribution of the money, we only ask that you be fair. I do not think that EMT's should be fighting fires. If you are going to place three (3) EMT's in the rescue departments, I want three (3) more people placed in the Hallsboro Fire Department.
2. **Eddy Morgan (Lake Waccamaw Fire/Rescue Chief):** the EMT personnel we have on board answers calls eight (8) hours in the daytime. We are presently receiving twenty-nine thousand and 00/100 (\$29,000.00) dollars from Columbus County. This is certainly a big help but we could not operate on this amount alone. I send four (4) people out on an ALS call and three (3) people out on a non-ALS call. We went online in February with the taxpayer's money. We are utilizing contract labor and our method seems to be working well. If the fire departments are truly interested in receiving this two (\$.02) cents district tax, they should consider going through the necessary steps to accomplish this and reap this benefit.
3. **Donna Hammond (ADR Rescue Chief):** we have three (3) paid Intermediate EMT's. We utilize a billing system for our services. I strongly urge each department to be patient and give this system a fair chance to work and allow Dr. Fred Obrecht to get his plan in place.
4. **Brady Watts (Nakina Fire and Rescue):** we operate on six (6) hours shifts. We utilize three (3) people per ambulance. On fire calls, our EMT's go to the fire but do not actively fight fires, they stay with the ambulance. We are on call twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week. Our system of paying our personnel seems to be working very well. I agree wholeheartedly that the fire departments that are truly interested in receiving the two (\$.02) cents district tax should follow the necessary steps to accomplish this and reap the benefits.
5. **E.D. Meares (Fair Bluff Fire and Rescue):** we utilize four (4) paid personnel per call. Our EMT's will be I's. We utilize this tax money for salaries, but this amount alone would never

be enough to operate the department. We have to rely on donations, fund raisers and monetary amounts from the other areas we serve. By June 1, 2002, all of our EMT's will be I's. Our system of paying our personnel is working very smoothly.

6. **Steve Camlin (ADR Fire Chief):** we operate on eighty-nine thousand and 00/100 (\$89,000.00) dollars per year. We presently have three (3) paid personnel. We answer five hundred fifty (550) calls per year. The purpose of this meeting is very unclear. The contracts that have been drawn up for the use of this rescue district tax are very clear as to the usage of this money

After extended discussion, it was the general consensus of the Board that these were employer and employee related expenses and as long as individuals were on a set schedule to be on call, the rescue district tax could be utilized for reimbursement..

Commissioner Gene Wilson urged every department to make every effort to make every call they receive.

Kenneth Sasser, Hallsboro Fire Chief, stated he still did not have an answer to his question.

ADJOURNMENT

This informational meeting was adjourned at 7:55 P.M.



JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

APPROVED:


AMON E. MCKENZIE, Chairman