

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, February 4, 2003

7:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Board of 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, to resume a meeting that was recessed on February 3, 2003.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

C.E. "Gene" Wilson, **Chairman**
 Bill Memory, **Vice Chairman**
 David L. Dutton, Jr.
 (Arrived at 7:20 P.M.)
 Godwin, Kipling (Arrived at 7:15 P.M.)
 Sammie Jacobs
 Amon E. McKenzie
 Lynwood Norris

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Administrator**
 Darren L. Currie, **Assistant County Administrator**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

James E. Hill, Jr. **County Attorney**

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Connie Batson, **State Emergency Services Representative**
 Dr. Fred O'Brecht, **Director of Columbus County Emergency Services Plan**
 John H. Moore, Jr., **Columbus County Emergency Services Director**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

At 7:00 P.M., Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order. The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Memory.

TRAINING OF FIRE/RESCUE PERSONNEL:

Steve Camlin, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Acme-Delco-Riegelwood Fire and Rescue, Incorporated, addressed the Board regarding the following issues:

1. The training of our Intermediate Level Personnel has become costly and burdensome to this department.
2. We received our Intermediate Level Program two (2) years ago and are presently running seventy (70) MTI's and six (6) part-time MTI's.
3. At our meeting on the eve of Thanksgiving in 2002, we were approached regarding this training and that it must be done at Columbus County Hospital or at Southeastern Community College, which both locations will be forty-two (42) miles away for our personnel to travel.
4. This training will incur a cost of three thousand six hundred and 00/100 (\$3,600.00) dollars a year for three (3) people to attend and this does not include our part-time personnel.
5. Dempsey B. Herring, past County Administrator, okayed this training to be done at our building.
6. We are asking for you, as a Board, to reconsider the location of this training and allow the training to be conducted at the station.
7. I would like to know why the past practice was broken.
8. We cannot abide by what you are asking us to do.
9. I would also like to know why a firefighter cannot drive an ambulance unless they have a drug and urine test done.

Chairman Wilson asked Steve Camlin if they provided intermediate service twenty-four (24) hours a day. Steve Camlin replied stating yes they did.

Chairman Wilson asked if there were any times that the department did not answer a call? Steve Camlin replied stating yes and that every department misses a call because they are a volunteer department but tries diligently to avoid this from happening.

Commissioner McKenzie recommended Billy Joe Farmer, County Administrator meet with Emergency Medical Services on a workable plan to bring back to the Board.

Chairman Wilson requested that Dr. Fred O'Brecht respond to the concerns that have been expressed by Steve Camlin. Dr. Fred O'Brecht stated the following:

1. The Emergency Medical Services Plan is very complex.
2. In 2001, the General Assembly passed Bills #HB452 and HB453 stating that emergency medical services must be provided to its citizens.
3. The draft of the Columbus County Emergency Medical Services Plan was made available in October, 2002 for everyone involved to review. Everyone involved with this Plan had the month of November and part of December to review and offer comments. We had our final meeting in early December at which time the committee approved this plan.
4. The Columbus County Commissioners approved this plan at their December 2, 2002 Meeting.
5. On the State Website, you will see that the State requires twenty-four (24) hours of Continuing Education Units for higher level squads.
6. The outcome measure for success in these squads is the tests that are administered to the participants.
7. The required central spot for educating the personnel is to ensure the level of quality and training is being provided to all concerned personnel. That is to say the same material to the same group in a controlled environment.
8. The scope of practice is to help educate how to blend all skills for the best results in time of need where departments depend on each other for help.
9. The expectation is to provide the same level of acceptance, skills and professionalism.

DANNY CLEWIS (Instructor from Southeastern Community College): stated the following:

1. I am an instructor for Southeastern Community College and have been certified since 1989 as a Level I Instructor for the State.
2. It is very important to bring all personnel to a central unit for their training to develop unity.
3. We have classes dealing with the following:
 - A. Quality Management Committee;
 - B. Protocol Driven; **and**
 - C. Infectious Control and Hazmat.
4. There are two (2) instructors for each class.

Mr. Phelps (ADR): I would like to know why firefighters cannot drive an ambulance.

Connie Batson: The County must have a policy in place. The present plan includes a medical provider and not firefighters.

Danny Clewis: This issue needs to be addressed in the Quality Management Committee.

Commissioner Kipling Godwin: We can check and see if the County Commissioners can make restrictions in addition to the State.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: A driving class for firefighters is available at Southeastern Community College headed up by Edwin Ezzell.

Chairman Wilson: Is this the only reason for not allowing firefighters to drive ambulances?

Dr. O'Brecht: I do think proper training is needed and the required tests are necessary.

Commissioner Memory: It is of my opinion that the drivers of these vehicles should be free of any drugs or alcohol when operating these vehicles.

Tommy Justice (ADR): I am an Intermediate and a firefighter. It appears to me the only department benefitting from this plan is Whiteville due to the training location chosen.

Danny Clewis: The personnel in the surrounding counties are paid personnel. They have Advanced Life Support. We have previously scheduled meetings at four (4) locations. There was no ADR personnel that showed up.

Commissioner Jacobs: We need flexibility in this plan.

Donna Hammond (ADR): The ADR missed the class Danny is speaking of due to a miscommunication between the college and ADR. I have been an instructor since 1977.

Elton Ray Jacobs (Chief at Buckhead): We are a Level I department. I strongly support the urine and drug testing for firefighters.

Chairman Wilson: In the General Election on November 7, 2000, a County-wide two (\$.02) cents Rescue Tax for Intermediate County Rescue Services was voted in.

Connie Batson (Regional Specialist for EMS for State): stated the following:

1. The Columbus County Emergency Services Plan is being reviewed by the State;
2. The responsibility is placed back to the County as to needs;
3. The State is held responsible for the EMS Plan;
4. In the EMS Plan, you must appoint a Medical Director;
5. The Medical Director must overview and oversee the EMS Plan;
6. The Medical Director is in charge of the educational program; **and**
7. The County Commissioners are ultimately responsible for the plan.

Commissioner Memory: stated the following:

1. It appears that some departments don't clearly understand the significance of this plan;
2. It appears from what is being stated that centralized training is essential;
3. The drivers, if desired, can obtain the necessary training to drive an ambulance and a fire truck;
4. There appears to be friction between the individual departments and the instructors; **and**
5. We would like to know how to best resolve this problem.

Commissioner McKenzie: I think we need to be more flexible and more sensitive to the people's needs.

Chairman Wilson: The Board of Commissioners hired Dr. Fred O'Brecht to oversee this plan and we should support his decisions.

Commissioner Dutton: We would like for Dr. Fred O'Brecht to consider this problem.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: stated the following:

1. There is some good news we have received about the EMS Plan. This news is from Greg Meares, State EMS Director, by e-mail stating that our EMS Plan is a model system. We are definitely not seeking a model system but would like one that best suits the needs of Columbus County.
2. I do not think twenty-one (21) hours of training at a central location is too much to ask of the personnel.
3. There are two hundred seventy (270) plus people working under my medical license.
4. If a centralized location is not established, the training will get out of hand.
5. The plan has been made as flexible as possible.
6. I would like for the County Commissioners to reconsider this, we definitely need unity in Columbus County.
7. I am asking the Board of Commissioners to not take action and to let the plan stand as it is.
8. Everyone involved has had sufficient time to review this plan and state their changes if they

wanted them to be made.

9. We must prove to the State the system is working.
10. I do think this is the best system for Columbus County.
11. I would like your stamp of approval on this plan.

Commissioner Dutton: What about the amount of expenses that are being incurred by the departments that are traveling so far?

Steve Camlin: The money incurred is not as much of a problem as taking the personnel out of their specified area for such a long period of time.

Commissioner Godwin: There are three (3) locations for centralized training in Horry County. I think we need to move our training to other centralized locations in addition to Southeastern Community College.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: At this time, the plan will remain the same and I ask that the County Commissioners take no action tonight.

Commissioner McKenzie: Unity requires cooperation and is it possible to be more considerate in the personnel's needs?

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: I know that change is never easy for anyone. Commissioner McKenzie, do you think this request is unreasonable?

Commissioner McKenzie: No this request is not unreasonable, but I would like to see it be more flexible and to accommodate the needs of our emergency personnel.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: The best system for Columbus County would be a centralized system and if any department has a problem with this, they need to attend the Quality Assurance Meeting with their dialogue.

E.D. Meares (Fair Bluff Fire and Rescue): I strongly support this plan but I suggest that you offer split classes.

Steve Camlin (ADR): Our department received this plan by floppy and did not know when the plan was adopted.

Chairman Wilson: I suggest that a meeting be established with Billy Joe Farmer, County Administrator, and Dr. Fred O'Brecht to work these problems out.

Donna Hammond (ADR): Our department did go to the scheduled training classes.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: It is of my opinion it would be best to keep this plan in place.

Commissioner Memory: I recommend that Danny Clewis, Dr. Fred O'Brecht, Steve Camlin, John Moore and Billy Joe Farmer, County Administrator to get together and discuss problems and find an equitable solution.

Commissioner Jacobs: After a solution has been reached, bring the solution to the Board.

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: stated the following concerns:

1. Since this plan is already in place, do I designate deficiencies? **and**
2. Do I recommend people in plan to attend classes?

Board's Reply: Yes.

Commissioner Godwin: is it possible to have two (2) classes at Southeastern Community College and have one (1) class at another location?

Dr. Fred O'Brecht: It is my medical opinion that would not be good.

Commissioner Godwin: It is my understanding this committee (as described by the state) should include the following people:

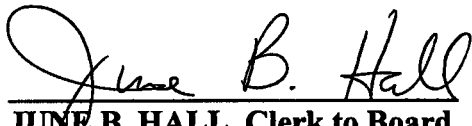
1. Representatives from EMS (all chiefs);
2. Doctors;
3. Nurse Liaison;
4. Hospital Administrator;
5. Columbus County Administrator;
6. 911 Department
7. Local law enforcement and Sheriff, if necessary; **and**
8. Local Fire Departments, if necessary.

Commissioner Wilson stated that discussion of this matter had been going on for over two (2) hours and no workable solution had been reached at this time. I recommend we allow the people designated earlier to establish a meeting time, discuss the issue and bring to the Board a workable solution for the Board's consideration.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 9:03 P.M., Commissioner Jacobs made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Godwin. The motion so carried.

APPROVED:


JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board


C.E. WILSON, Chairman