

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING
NAKINA VOLUNTEER FIRE and RESCUE DEPARTMENT
Thursday, April 3, 2003
6:30 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time at the Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department to hold a Public Hearing which was duly advertised.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

C.E. "Gene" Wilson, **Chairman**
 Bill Memory, **Vice Chairman**
 David L. Dutton, Jr.
 Kipling Godwin
 Amon E. McKenzie

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Administrator**
 James E. Hill, Jr., **County Attorney**
 Darren L. Carrie, **Assistant County Administrator**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Sammie Jacobs
 Lynwood Norris

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Wilson called the Public Hearing to order at 6:30 P.M.. The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Bill Memory. Chairman Wilson stated the reason for this Public Hearing was to discuss and receive public comments regarding the acquisition, by lease purchase, of one (1) Emergency-One fire apparatus mounted on a 2003 Freightliner M2 Chasis and the refinance of existing debt and financial arrangements related thereto. The approximate amount of issue will be one hundred sixty thousand and 00/100 (\$160,000.00) dollars. Chairman Wilson asked John Ward, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, to provide some detailed information relative to this Public Hearing. John Ward stated the following:

1. The Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department presently has two (2) fire trucks. One (1) of these trucks is a 1974 and one (1) is a 1979. Neither of these fire trucks will pass the pumper test required by the State.
2. Surf City donated one (1) 1974 fire truck to this department but it has motor problems which will have to be fixed before it is used.
3. In order for the Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department to keep our 9S Rating, we must have the necessary equipment to pass the pumper test that is required by the State.
4. The State has given us a period of time to get our equipment up to standard or we will be forced to close the doors and not stay in operation. We have had to get an extension on this deadline.
5. We are borrowing one hundred sixty thousand and 00/100 (\$160,000.00) dollars for the purchase of a new fire truck, equipment and operating expenses.

FLOOR OPENED for DISCUSSION:

Chairman Wilson opened the floor for discussion and the following information ensued:

1. **Chairman Wilson:** Mr. Ward, how many years is this amount of money financed for? John Ward replied stating it was financed for twenty-five (25) years and if the fire service tax district is established, the time will be shortened.
2. **Commissioner Dutton:** Mr. Ward, what is the payment on this amount of money? John Ward replied stating the payment was twelve thousand six hundred ninety-five and 23/100 (\$12,695.23) dollars per year.

3. **Commissioner McKenzie:** Mr. Ward, what is the interest rate on this money? John Ward replied stating he did not have that information available with him but he could obtain it if it was necessary.
4. **Jackie Ward:** asked John Ward the following questions:
 - A. What is the life of this truck going to be? John Ward replied stating the life of the truck, if serviced property would be thirty to thirty-five (30-35) years.
 - B. What would it cost to refurbish the two (2) trucks you already have? Mr. Ward replied stating fifteen thousand to twenty thousand and 00/100 (\$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00) dollars each and then you would not know how long they would last.
5. **Commissioner Memory:** Mr. Ward, what is the holding capacity and pump rate on the new truck? Mr. Ward replied stating the holding capacity was one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) gallon pumper with an one thousand (1,000) gallon tank.
6. **Jennifer Long:** Mr. Ward, who is be responsible for the one hundred sixty thousand and 00/100 (\$160,000.00) dollars loan? John Ward responded that the Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department would be responsible.

Chairman Wilson called for an audience vote. The results of the audience vote was as follows:

In Favor:	Sixteen (16)
Against:	One (1)

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING:

At 6:41 P.M., Chairman Wilson announced the Public Hearing was closed.

APPROVED:



JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board



C.E. WILSON, Chairman

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING
NAKINA VOLUNTEER FIRE and RESCUE DEPARTMENT
Thursday, April 3, 2003
7:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time at the Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department to hold a Public Hearing which was duly advertised to consider the formation of a fire tax service district in Columbus County, to be known as the Nakina Fire District.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

C.E. "Gene" Wilson, **Chairman**
 Bill Memory, **Vice Chairman**
 David L. Dutton, Jr.
 Kipling Godwin
 Amon E. McKenzie

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Administrator**
 James E. Hill, Jr., **County Attorney**
 Darren L. Carrie, **Assistant County Administrator**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Sammie Jacobs
 Lynwood Norris

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Wilson called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 P.M. and stated the purpose of this Public Hearing is to hear public comment and input on the formation of a fire tax service district in Columbus County known as the Nakina Fire District. Chairman Wilson requested John Ward, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Nakina Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, to present information to the audience regarding this matter. Mr. Ward stated the following:

1. The fire trucks we presently have will not pass the pumper test that is required by the State for this department to stay in operation.
2. We cannot operate as a fire department without a pumper that will pass the pumper test.
3. With the purchase of the new truck and necessary equipment, we can better serve our people.
4. We are always open for new members.
5. The turn-out gear for a firefighter will cost approximately five thousand and 00/100 (\$5,000.00) dollars and with the necessary radio it would be more.
6. We have strict OSHA regulations and guidelines that must be adhered to.
7. As you can see by the handouts we have provided, for a fire truck to properly operate in accordance to the guidelines we have to follow, we need forty-four thousand and 00/100 (\$44,000.00) dollars worth of equipment on it.
8. This department supplies our workers with Workers Compensation insurance which is not cheap.

FLOOR OPENED for DISCUSSION:

Chairman Wilson opened the floor for discussion and input from anyone in attendance at this Public Hearing. The following information ensued:

1. **Citizen (did not state name):** Where do the funds you operate on now get allocated from?
John Ward: Columbus County allocates fifteen thousand one hundred forty-two and 00/100 (\$15,142.00) dollars annually.
 Who has projected how much money you would need to update the equipment you presently have?
John Ward: we have obtained quotes from garages and dealers who are in this line of business.

2. **Jerry Avery, Columbus County Fire Marshal:** John, you need to inform the citizens in this district about the homeowners insurance.
John Ward: If we can obtain our 9S Insurance Rating, we can keep the cost of our homeowners insurance down. If we should lose our 9S Insurance Rating, the insurance stands to increase approximately forty to fifty (40-50%) percent. Some of the companies that cover this area has informed us if this rating is lost, then the company will pull out the area and not write any policies at any amount. I will ask Tom Ray who works with Farm Bureau Insurance to supply us with some information.
3. **Tom Ray (Farm Bureau Agent):** Most rural areas are protection Class 9. The other Class T means no fire protection. The minimum increase if the Class 9 protection does not exist will be twenty-five (25%) percent and each insurance company will decide on the increase they will charge. It is very important to keep the Class 9 Insurance Rating to control the cost of your homeowners insurance.
4. **J.D. Gore:** Mr. Ray, you stated twenty-five (25%) percent minimum increase on homeowners insurance. Does this amount apply to everything?
Tom Ray: this amount applies to certain dwellings. The mobile home rate would be the same regardless. Each insurance company has the right to establish their own increase.
5. **Charles McDowell:** I have contacted Nationwide Insurance Company which is the company I use and I have been informed they would not write any insurance policies if the 9S Insurance Rating is lost. If I understood correctly, we are talking about a twenty-five to forty (25% to 40%) percent increase in our homeowners insurance policies. What percent is the proposed fire tax?
John Ward: The amount proposed is 08/100 (\$.08) cents per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.00) dollars.
6. **David Gore:** Is this 08/100 (\$.08) cents per household or per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.00) dollars of property value?
John Ward: It is per one hundred and 00/100 (\$100.00) dollars of property value.
7. **Citizen (did not state name):** Will this rate be going up each year?
John Ward: No.
8. **Citizen (did not state name):** I don't mind this tax one bit, but I would like to know that this money will be audited on a regular basis and will be utilized for the purpose it was intended for.
9. **Chairman Wilson:** Columbus County has a contract with each department and in this contract, it states each department must furnish us with a complete audit before the yearly allocation will be dispensed to them.
10. **Citizen (did not state name):** Do you have a rough estimate of the amount this fire tax will generate for the department if passed?
John Ward: Based on the information I obtained from the Columbus County Tax Department, the amount will be thirty-seven thousand two hundred and 00/100 (\$37,200.00) dollars.
11. **Commissioner Kip Godwin:** That's a five (5) mile service area?
John Ward: that is a five (5) mile service area.
12. **Citizen (did not state name):** Has this district been extended to a six (6) mile service district?
Jerry Avery, Columbus County Fire Marshall): No, it hasn't, but we are in the process of doing that. The paperwork for this is in Raleigh at the present time.
13. **Henry Rowan:** I live on Road 1142 and I am here to support friends. I truly think the funds for the fire and rescue departments should be separated and handled like two (2) entities. If it was done this way, then we would know where the money is being expended.

John Ward: I agree with you one hundred (100%) percent.

14. **Citizen (did not state name):** Doesn't the rescue squad already get tax?

John Ward: the rescue squad receives a two (2%) percent tax.

15. **Mary Cartrette:** I do not think all of our citizens fully realize how valuable our local fire department is. I experienced a fire in an outside building that would have eventually traveled to my dwelling. My neighbors came and tried to help but the equipment we had to use was not sufficient to extinguish the fire. The Nakina Volunteer Fire Department was called and when they arrived, they had the fire extinguished in a short period of time. The entire community needs to be uplifting this department for supplying what this community desperately needs.

16. **Billy Long:** I wish to thank all the volunteers for what they sacrifice their time to do. The department could run more efficiently if more people chose to volunteer their time and work. If this fire tax does not pass tonight, do you have a Plan B?

Chairman Wilson: if this fire tax is not passed tonight, you can wait the due process time and hold another public hearing regarding the same matter and see what the results are at that time.

Billy Long: in addition to passing a fire tax, is there another alternative that can be utilized?

Chairman Wilson: the only other alternative to the fire tax, is to have a fire fee where you are only taxed on the dwelling).

17. **David Gore:** What is the amount of the fire fee?

Chairman Wilson: based on the material I have read from the State, the maximum amount is fifty-five and 00/100 (\$55.00) per dwelling.

18. **Citizen (did not state name):** The tax on property owned is unfair. Someone may own two thousand (2,000) acres of land and someone may own five (5) acres of land.

19. **Henry Rowan:** I would like to ditto that. I think it is unfair for someone who owns only five (5) acres of land to be taxed at the same rate as someone who owns two thousand (2,000) acres.

20. **John Harrelson:** It does not matter whether you own two thousand (2,000) acres of land or five (5) acres of land, the tax rate will be the same, eight (\$.08) cents per one hundred (\$100.00) dollars. If anyone should own two thousand (2,000) acres of land, then that person should be able to pay this tax.

21. **Terry Ward:** Do you want to know why the local people are not supporting this department as much as they were?

John Ward: In my honest opinion, I think it is due to the economy situation. The economy situation has steadily declined since the 911 incident.

Terry Ward: Some things are going on in the department. The Board of Directors are making decisions and not involving the citizens. Some things are not going right.

22. **J.D. Gore:** If you truly feel that things are not being handled properly, then donate your time to the department and find out what these things are.

Response from Fire Personnel as a Unit: Yes, we need more volunteers.

23. **Citizen (did not state name):** The Nakina Fire Department personnel needs an adequate amount of training hours to keep their certification.

John Ward: the fire department personnel needs thirty-six plus (36t) hours. Two hundred forty (240) hours more class work will be needed for the rescue side to be upgraded to the standards we have been told we have to meet.

24. **David Gore:** Do all the Rescue Departments have the same billing service?

John Ward: Yes.

David Gore: my wife was involved in a wreck and the Rescue Squad transported her to the hospital. We were sent a bill for five hundred and 00/100 (\$500.00) dollars from the Rescue

Department. This should have been sent to our insurance company. I had to write a personal check for this amount. At this rate of billing, I think the Rescue Department is getting adequate funds. I think we should go with the fifty and 00/100 (\$50.00) dollars per household fee. Do you know how many households are in this fire district?

John Ward: based on the letters I mailed out for this Public Hearing, it is seven hundred, plus (700t)

David Gore: If you did utilize the fifty and 00/100 (\$50.00) dollars per household, how much revenue would this generate?

John Ward: thirty-five thousand and 00/100 (\$35,000.00) dollars.

25. **Shelia Singletary:** Has the fire district been extended to a six (6) mile district?

Jerry Avery, Columbus County Fire Marshall: No, but the paperwork for this process is in Raleigh.

26. **Citizen (did not state name):** I understand that this is the biggest fire service area in Columbus County. Is that correct?

John Ward: Yes.

Citizen (did not state name): this being the biggest fire service area in Columbus County, could there be a substation located in the Fireway area to protect those citizens?

John Ward: that idea would definitely be pursued.

27. **Citizen (did not state name):** The Plan B you were discussing earlier and the maximum being fifty-five and 00/100 (\$55.00) dollars, is this on all property owned or on dwellings?

Chairman Wilson: this is only on the dwelling.

28. **Jerry Avery, Columbus County Fire Marshall:** The six (6) mile district that is being referred to is not as simple as it sounds. With the five (5) mile district, it does not mean five miles straight shot from the Fire Department, it means five (5) miles of driving time from the building. The six (6) mile district will not be as advantageous in some areas as it will be in other areas. This is due to some districts will abut up before the extra mile is utilized and in some areas, it will dead head.

29. **J.D. Gore:** If the citizens should decide not to go either way that has been presented, what is the possibility of other fire departments covering this district?

John Ward: there are three (3) other fire departments that could cover this district by utilizing substations. They are: Williams Township, Tabor City and Old Dock.

30. **Henry Rowan:** Is this a brand new truck you are talking about?

John Ward: yes.

31. **Mary Cartrette:** With the new fire truck, will this improve your response time?

John Ward: it should in a mechanical sense, but this being a volunteer department, that would depend on availability of personnel.

32. **Jennifer Long:** Does the Fire Department get compensated? The reason I am asking, I experienced a fire in my house due to my negligence and the Nakina Fire Department responded to it, but I did not receive a bill.

33. **Citizen (did not state name):** I do not think everyone truly realizes what it feels like to experience a house fire. My house caught fire, but luckily we were able to extinguish the fire before it was too late. Everyone needs to value the worth of their house and compare it to the cost of fire protection.

34. **Henry Rowan:** Why did you wait until the financial situation was so bad until you decided to act.

John Ward: we attempted to survive on the dollar amount in our budget without burdening our local citizens.

35. **Henry Rowan:** What are the options we have to vote on?

Chairman Wilson: you can vote yes or no on the Fire Service Tax District.

36. **Citizen (did not state name):** What is the amount of your fiscal year budget?
John Ward: the annual budget we operate on is the fifteen thousand one hundred forty-two and 00/100 (\$15,142.00) that is allocated to us from Columbus County and if this fire tax is passed, the thirty-seven thousand two hundred and 00/100 (\$37,200.00) dollars would be an addition.
37. **Commissioner Kip Godwin:** What is the actual annual budget you have been operating on?
John Ward: the allocation from Columbus County of fifteen thousand one hundred forty-two and 00/100 (\$15,142.00) dollars and any donations we receive.
38. **Brady Watts:** I have been a member of this Fire Department for many years and I would like to see more citizen participation. If they would come and see first hand what is entailed in this line of work, they would be very anxious to make all donations possible and to help this fire tax pass.
39. **Citizen (did not state name):** If this fire tax passes, will we still get the allocation from Columbus County?
Chairman Wilson: Yes.
40. **Henry Rowan:** How long will the eight (\$.08) cents fire tax be in effect? Why not start with four (\$.04) cents and then raise the amount later?
41. **J.D. Gore:** What is the possibility of the allocation from Columbus County decreasing?
Chairman Wilson: we don't foresee it changing.
Commissioner Memory: every department receives the same amount of allocation regardless of the fire tax rate.
42. **Citizen (did not state name):** If you should decide to increase this fire tax rate, would it require public input for you to do so?
Chairman Wilson: yes.
43. **Citizen (Long):** I am a member of this department and we have operating with some very bad equipment. This is not safe for us or the citizens. In a time of crisis, you need equipment that will provide safety and the quickest response time possible.
44. **Allan Morris:** I call for a vote on this fire tax now.
45. **Bobby Joe Long:** It is my opinion that every citizen present here tonight should be thanking the personnel for their dedication to this department and the donation of their time. If a lot more citizens would donate their time, then things would run smoother. No one should be trying to find fault of what the department is trying to do. If you are not willing to do a task yourself, then don't criticize the one that does the task.
46. **Commissioner David L. Dutton, Jr.:** I would like to inform the citizens here tonight that the majority vote rules either way.

After everyone had spoken that desired to do so, Chairman Wilson called for a vote to stop the debate by a show of uplifted hands. The mass majority voted to stop the debate.

After the majority vote had been taken to stop the debate, Chairman Wilson called for a vote to be taken for the Fire Tax Service District. The results were as follows:

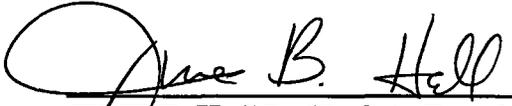
In Favor:	89
Against:	5.

Chairman Wilson informed the audience this matter would be taken under consideration at the April 7, 2003 Board Meeting.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING:

At 8:01 P.M., the Public Hearing was closed.

APPROVED:



JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board



C.E. WILSON, Chairman

