

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING**

Tuesday, December 28, 2004

7:00 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time in the Fellowship Hall of Olyphic Missionary Baptist church, located at 19062 Seven Creeks Highway, (Highway 905), Tabor City, North Carolina, for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing which was duly advertised and this Public Hearing being relative to the location of a substation in the Pireway area for Nakina Fire and Rescue Department.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Sammie Jacobs, **Chairman**
Kipling Godwin, **Vice Chairman**
James E. Prevatte
Bill Memory
Lynwood Norris
David L. Dutton, Jr.

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

Amon E. McKenzie

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

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

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

Roxanne Coleman, **Finance Officer**

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED TO ORDER:

At 7:00 P.M., Chairman Jacobs called the Public Hearing to order. The invocation was delivered by Roger McPherson. Chairman Jacobs stated the purpose of this Public Hearing was to receive comments, either oral or written, from the citizenry regarding the fire service tax district, in conjunction with the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department, establishing a fire substation in the Pireway area, along Seven Creeks Highway.

DISCUSSION of SUBSTATION in PIREWAY AREA:

The following people spoke on the matter of the location of a substation for the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department in the Pireway area.

James E. Hill, Jr., Columbus County Attorney: I encourage each of you to speak on this matter.

John Ward, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Nakina Fire and Rescue Department:

1. The substation will be located on Old Dothan Road next to a double wide trailer;
2. We have acquired the land which was donated;
3. If we get this substation, this area will have a 9S insurance rating and this will, in turn, drop each citizen's insurance rate significantly;
4. This area of Columbus County is presently not in a fire district, but the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department and Tabor City Fire Department do service this area whenever possible;
5. The response from either of the previously listed departments is not good due to the distance they must travel to reach the area;
6. This area has been in need of this substation for a long time;
7. We have been house-to-house with petitions, which is required by law, to acquire the signatures of the citizens of this area and acquired all the signatures from the citizens except two (2); and
8. If we get this substation, it will cut our response time in less than half.

Danny Chestnut, private citizen:

1. I think this substation will be very good for the community; and
2. I would like to know who will pay for the cost of this substation.

John Ward: in response to Danny Chestnut's question, stated the following:

1. If this substation is approved, there will be an eight (\$.08) cents tax on the value of the citizen's property;
2. This revenue will be used for the substation building, a pumper tank and the needed eight (8)

- available firefighters;
3. The substation will be eight to nine (8-9) miles from the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department; **and**
 4. The trucks being utilized have been monitored by the State inspectors and have passed the necessary tests.

Commissioner Memory: Where does the coverage for this area come from now?

John Ward: in response to Commissioner Memory's question, replied stating Nakina Fire and Rescue Department and sometimes Tabor Fire Department, when possible.

Ronnie Hayes, Columbus County Emergency Services Director:

1. This substation is badly needed in this area;
2. It is very expensive to operate a fire department;
3. The equipment for these fire trucks is very expensive and must pass rigid inspections by the State;
4. To fully dress out one (1) firefighter with the necessary equipment, it costs five thousand and 00/100 (\$5,000.00) dollars; **and**
5. If approved, this substation will be a great benefit to the citizens of this area.

Vice Chairman Godwin: What is the present distance from the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department?

John Ward: in response to Vice Chairman Godwin's question, stated eight to nine (8-9) miles.

Keith Lay, private citizen: stated the following:

1. I think a tax on buildings would be more fair than a tax on the valuation of property;
2. The tax on citizens' property will be very costly for the ones who own large amounts of property;
3. The people who only own a one-half (½) acre tract will not pay very much and still receive the same type service as the ones who own many acres; **and**
4. I am all for this substation, but I think you need to get the revenue from a fee rather than a tax on property.

Danny Chestnut, private citizen: stated the following:

1. I am all for this substation because we have needed this for many years;
2. I am opposed to the method of revenue being a tax on property; **and**
3. A fee per premises would be more fair and equitable.

James E. Hill, Jr.: I know of only two (2) fire departments within Columbus County who utilize a fee per premises and they are North Whiteville and Cerro Gordo. They had to get special legislation enacted in order to get this done.

Danny Chestnut, private citizen: Would this tax be on vehicles also? James E. Hill, Jr., replied stating yes.

Discussion was conducted among the audience regarding the substation area being a fee district even though the Nakina Fire District is a tax district. It was made known the possibility of a fee district was voted down at the Public Hearing conducted for the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department to become a tax district.

Danny Chestnut, private citizen: Can part of a fire district be a tax district and part of it be a fee district? James E. Hill, Jr., replied stating he will check on this.

Debbie Ward, private citizen: stated the following:

1. I have been a member of the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department for seventeen (17) years;
2. We have serviced this area to the best of our ability to do so;
3. Due to the distance, we may not have saved the building, but we may save a life and that, in itself, is much more important;
3. Two (2) years ago, we almost lost everything;
4. We got a tax district voted in and received a FEMA grant which aided this department to turn things around so we would not be closed down;

5. We provide the public with equipment in addition to firefighting; and
6. Render aid in any emergency, when needed.

Keith Lay: I think a vote should be taken by the people this substation is going to affect for this to be a fair process.

Mack Henniford, private citizen: Will this proposed fire substation have any impact on this area acquiring water, or is this just a rumor? The overall response from the Board members was that this was just a rumor right now.

Commissioner Memory: asked the people who were present tonight that was not affiliated with the Nakina Fire and Rescue Department to please raise their hand. Nine (9) people raised their hands for count. Commissioner Memory stated the Board may have to set another hearing on this matter after James E. Hill, Jr., Columbus County Attorney, has made discovery on the question that has been asked.

Chairman Jacobs: We would like to take a vote from the audience of those in favor and those not in favor of this proposed substation in the Pireway Community. The results of the vote taken were as follows:

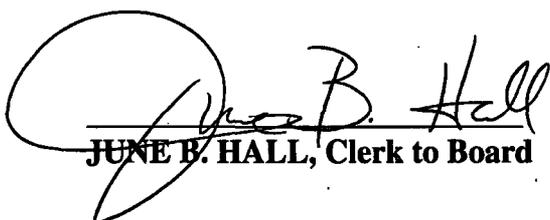
FOR: Nine (9)
AGAINST: None.

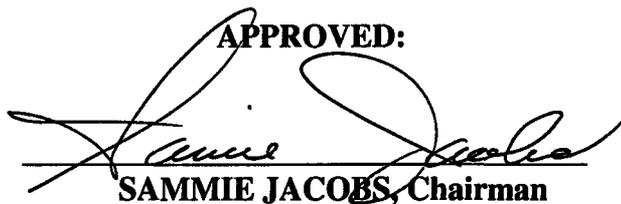
Earl Browder: Most people are in favor of this proposed substation. It appears the only question being raised is the method of revenue.

Fred Lay: I wish people would have worked harder for the water and sewer in this area. My water is terrible and we need good water in this area. When an area has water and sewer, their property value increases.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:

At 7:45 P.M., there being no further comments, the Public Hearing was closed.


JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

APPROVED:

SAMMIE JACOBS, Chairman

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