

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP
Thursday, June 16, 2005
6:00 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 conducting a Budget Workshop.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Billy Joe Farmer, **County Manager**
 Darren L. Currie, **Assistant County Manager**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**
 Roxanne Coleman, **Finance Officer**

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

Lynwood Norris

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

At 6:00 P.M., Chairman Jacobs called the Budget Workshop to order and stated Darren L. Currie, Assistant County Manager, had distributed a list of items that needed to be addressed by the Board relative to the finalization of the Columbus County 2005-2006 Operating Budget. Chairman Jacobs requested Mr. Currie to present each item listed on the handout to the Board.

Mr. Currie presented the following items that needed to be addressed by the Board for their direction in the finalization of the budget.

1. Golden Leaf Application:

A. Additional money for the Wastewater Treatment Facility at Wright Corporation - Mr. Currie requested Billy Joe Farmer, Columbus County Manager, to present this information and Mr. Farmer stated the following:

- 1) Monies were received from the Golden Leaf Foundation for this project;
- 2) This project has been in the making for seven (7) years;
- 3) We had to divide this project into two (2) phases, Phase I and Phase II;
- 4) One (1) problem that we encountered was, we could not get a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from the State in a timely manner;
- 5) Phase I of this project has already been started with bids coming in under \$12,000 of the amount allotted;
- 6) The bids for Phase II of this project have come in well above the \$1.6 million that have been allotted;
- 7) The engineers and I traveled to Raleigh to meet with the contractors to try and negotiate the amount, and we were successful in getting \$450,000 taken off, but we are still short \$400,000;
- 8) We have filed another application with Golden Leaf for this additional amount, but this will take more time than we have;
- 9) We are in need of \$400,000 right now, or, at least, a commitment for this amount right now in order to salvage this project; **and**
- 10) Wright Corporation has committed for \$394,000, and states they cannot borrow anymore money now.

B. Extension on time for the Prison Project - Mr. Farmer stated the following:

- 1) We have contacted the Golden Leaf Foundation to request an extension of twenty-four (24) months and additional funding;
- 2) The bids for the water came in over \$400,000 and the proposed cost was \$88,000 and this was due to the required change in the size of the water line;
- 3) The bids for the sewage came in at \$800,000, plus, and the proposed cost was \$400,000, plus; **and**
- 4) We are hoping that we can split the costs for the water line with the Town of Tabor

City.

Commissioner Memory asked Mr. Farmer what would the annual payback be if the Prison was moved to Water District 5. Mr. Farmer replied stating he did not know, but would get this information.

After discussion was conducted among the Board members relative to the information presented by Billy Joe Farmer, County Manager, it was the general consensus of the Board that \$400,000 was not available, and Mr. Farmer was to contact Wright Corporation and offer an incentive package with this information to be ready for the June 20, 2005 Board Meeting for consideration.

2 Sheriff - Funding of Detective Position for Tabor City and Fair Bluff:

Sheriff Christopher Batten stated he had received a request from the Town of Tabor City and the Town of Fair Bluff requesting the Columbus County Sheriff's Department help fund a detective position for these two (2) towns. Sheriff Batten stated he had done a study and indeed did find there was a need, but this would not be feasible for the Sheriff's Department to do now due to the costs involved. I am requesting the Board to set this request aside at this time.

It was the general consensus of the Board, concurred with Sheriff Batten, to set this matter aside at this time.

3 Request from Town of Chadbourn for recreation \$20,000.00: A letter has been received from Mayor Leo Mercer requesting Columbus County to provide assistance in the amount of at least \$20,000 to the recreation program for the Town of Chadbourn.

Discussion was conducted among the Board members relative to this request and it was the general consensus of the Board to not include this request in the Budget.

4 County Attorney Position: Mr. Currie stated he had obtained information relative to county attorneys and staff attorneys. On Page 12 of 147, you will see that \$246,000 were spent on professional services for the year. Printed material was presented to the Board showing salaries of County Attorneys in counties comparable to Columbus County's population.

Commissioner Prevatte stated we should be able to get a staff attorney and a board attorney for the amount we are spending on Professional Services.

Vice Chairman Godwin stated, from the printed information, the salary range was from \$57,000 to \$113,000, with an average annual salary of \$73,117, and I think we can get an attorney for this position at that salary. I recommend that we budget \$150,000 for the position of a staff attorney.

Commissioner Prevatte recommended that \$160,000 for the position of a staff attorney be included in the budget.

After additional discussion was conducted among the Board members, it was the general consensus of the Board to include \$160,000 for the position of Staff Attorney.

5 Moving position from Solid Waste to Tax Department: Mr. Currie stated there had been discussion relative to moving the Solid Waste Technician position from the Solid Waste Department to the Tax Department. This will be adding a position to the General Fund and currently, this position is paid from the 35 Fund and not the 10 Fund, and will create the question of job duties and supervisor issues.

After discussion was conducted relative to the pros and cons of this action, it was the general consensus of the Board to leave this position in the Solid Waste Department.

6 Request from 21st Century Committee for \$500,000.00: Chairman Jacobs stated this item would be addressed at the June 20, 2005 Board Meeting.

7 Request for Special Appropriations: Mr. Currie presented a list of Special Appropriations, and requested direction from the Board as to: 1) fund, or not fund; 2) if funded, at what

level; and; 3) funding the additional organizations.

After lengthy discussion was conducted relative to the funding of these Special Appropriations, it was the general consensus of the Board to fund the following Special Appropriations at the listed amount.

ORGANIZATION	FUNDED AMOUNT 05-06
Families First	\$8,000
American Legion	\$2,550
Governor's One on One	\$5,000
Literacy Council	\$1,200
Cape Fear RC&D	\$3,000
CAVE (SCC)	\$1,500
RSVP (SCC)	\$19,500
City of Whiteville (Parks 2 of 3)	\$25,000
Cape Fear Sentencing	\$4,500
SE Sickle Cell Association	\$1,200
Columbus County Youth and Families	\$2,500
Lower Cape Fear Hospice	\$1,200
Columbus County Arts Council	\$2,000
ARC - Summer Handicap Program	\$4,800
TOTAL:	\$81,950

- 8 **Request from Lower Cape Fear Hospice:** Mr. Currie stated Columbus County received a request from Lower Cape Fear Hospice for a commitment of \$50,000 over a five (5) year period at \$10,000 per year toward a LifeCareCenter to be located here in Whiteville.

After discussion was conducted among the Board members, it was the general consensus of the Board to pledge \$25,000 toward the LifeCareCenter over a five (5) year period, and \$5,000 would be given the first year, and then determine what can be done next year at the appropriate time.

- 9 **Waccamaw River Stream Restoration Project:** Mr. Currie stated this project has been underway for the past few years. The Board has been approached by several citizens and Boy Scouts regarding the condition of the Waccamaw River. We employed the services of the Natural Resource Conservation Service Area III engineer to make recommendations and provide a cost estimate for this project. The total project cost will be \$273,000, inclusive of cost to Columbus County Government at \$56,264, and Columbus County Staff (in-kind for Administration) at \$13,000.

After extensive discussion was conducted among the Board members regarding the condition of the Waccamaw River and its important role in Columbus County, it was the general consensus of the Board to fund this project.

- 10 **Animal Control:** Mr. Currie stated he had received the following two (2) requests relative to Animal Control and need Board direction:

- A. Humane Society Request - Change Animal Shelter Policy to differentiate between an animal adoption and an animal rescue, and to allow local animal rescue organizations to remove animals from the shelter without fees; **and**
- B. Request from Rossie Hayes, Animal Control Officer, to change the Fee Schedule.

Chairman Jacobs stated the Humane Society request would be addressed at the June 20, 2005 Board Meeting, and more information was needed for the request to change the Animal Control Fee

Schedule to make a determination.

- 11 **Current Year Request:** Mr. Currie stated that Southeastern Community College has submitted a Resolution requesting approval from the County Commissioners to transfer an amount not to exceed \$45,454 from the \$100,000 Capital Outlay Appropriation to Current Expense funds in order to meet fiscal year 2004-2005 budget needs.

After discussion was conducted among the Board members, it was the general consensus of the Board to approve the transfer of \$45,454 from the \$100,000 Capital Outlay Appropriation to Current Expense funds by Southeastern Community College in order to meet the fiscal year 2004-2005 budget needs.

OTHER ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

After the list of Budget Workshop Items to be Discussed presented by Darren L. Currie, Assistant County Manger, Chairman Jacobs asked if anyone in the audience had any items for discussion. The following people spoke.

1. **Marva Scott, Columbus County Social Services Director:** stated the following:
- A. During the time of my Administrative Leave, the Social Services Budget was presented to you by the Acting Director, Larry Moore, with some changes made;
 - B. I have went back and changed the line items back to the original amount submitted and the line items affected are as follows:
 - 1) Salaries and Wages - \$3,861,613,80 (inclusive of the 5% increase across-the-board and the \$2,500 salary increase recommended for me by the Social Services Board and denied by this Board)
 - 2) M/R - Vehicles - \$10,000
 - 3) Contracted Services - \$55,000
 - 4) Ins - Prof Liab, Property - \$129,000 (we are reimbursed 50% of this amount which, if not needed, can be used to purchase equipment with)
 - 5) Capital Outlay - \$88,400 (Purchase of Day Sheet Program which is a program to key information in by all workers to eliminate errors and obtain information faster)

After discussion was conducted among the Board members and Ms. Scott relative to this request, it was the general consensus of the Board to take this request under advisement.

2. **Andy Inman (Private Citizen):** stated the following:
- A. I have been following the statistical information that is being printed in the local newspaper regarding Columbus County Water District III, and based on the figures being printed, the users are increasing in number and the revenue is decreasing;
 - B. I would like to know how this can be;
 - C. The public deserves to be supplied with accurate information; **and**
 - D. I have yet to see any advertisement done to promote this County water and I think this needs to be done.

BUDGET WORKSHOP CLOSED:

At 8:55 P.M., Chairman Jacobs stated this Budget Workshop was closed.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

SAMMIE JACOBS, Chairman