

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP
Wednesday, June 29, 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**
Amon E. McKenzie
James E. Prevatte
Bill Memory
Lynwood Norris
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:

Kipling Godwin, **Vice Chairman**

BUDGET WORKSHOP CALLED to ORDER:

At 6:00 P.M., Chairman Jacobs called the Budget Workshop to order and stated this was an informal meeting.

Results from Recommended Departmental Budget Cuts:

Chairman Jacobs asked Billy Joe Farmer, County Manager, to state the monetary amount that was eliminated from the 2005-2006 Budget after the recommended cuts at the June 23, 2005 Budget Workshop were made. Mr. Farmer replied stating that only one hundred ten thousand and 00/100 (\$100,000.00) dollars were omitted after allowing for the overage in Medicaid.

Commissioner McKenzie asked if all the departments, that could cut their budget, responded back and if all departments had cut their budget as directed by the Board. Billy Joe Farmer, County Manager, and Darren Currie, Assistant County Manager, replied simultaneously, yes, the departments that could cut their budget did, but all departments did not cut their budget.

Chairman Jacobs asked Billy Joe Farmer, County Manager, to state the things that were cut from the budget. Mr. Farmer replied stating the items that were cut from the budget are new vehicles, equipment, interest on the Shell Building and the positions for the Sheriff.

Commissioner Memory asked Mr. Farmer if that included bringing the County employees to their salary mid-point and a two and one-half (2 ½%) percent increase. Mr. Farmer replied stating that was included in the five (5%) percent, and the salary increase would be determined on the following stipulations:

Full-time and part-time salaried employees, employed on or before July 1, 2004, will receive salary compensation equal to:

- Less than six (6) months employment - no increase;
- Less than two (2) years - 2.5% cola;
- More than two (2) years, but less than ten (10) - ½ way to midpoint, if at midpoint 2.5%;
- Ten (10) years but less than twenty (20) years - 3% if over mid point; **and**
- Twenty (20) or more years - 5% if over mid point.

Commissioner Prevatte asked Mr. Farmer if he stated the revenue neutral rate is sixty-five and one-half (\$.655) cents. Mr. Farmer replied stating yes and this is based on a ninety-three (93%) percent tax collection rate. The budget you have before you is based on a seventy-four and two-thirds (\$.74 2/3) cents property tax rate.

Additional Items Addressed:

Commissioner Memory recommended the following:

1. Set the property tax rate at seventy-three (\$.73) cents;
2. Continue on with the five (5%) percent salary increase for the County employees; **and**
3. Eliminate all non-essential personnel.

After discussion among the Board members, it was the general consensus of the Board to take twenty-five thousand and 00/100 (\$25,000.00) dollars away from the County Attorney position and eleven thousand and 00/100 (\$11,000.00) dollars away from Emergency Services for uniforms, and the Manager and Assistant Manager were directed to do so.

Clarification Requested by Marva Scott:

Marva Scott, Social Services Director, asked for some clarification on the new Pay Plan, and asked the following questions:

1. If an employee is not at their midpoint, are they going to be put at the midpoint?
2. Do the employees get a five (5%) percent pay increase, or a two and one-half (2 ½%) percent pay increase?; **and**
3. Do we go with the latest scale?

Roxanne Coleman, Columbus County Finance Officer, stated the new pay scale would be dropping one (1) step off the beginning and adding one (1) step to the end. Darren Currie, Assistant County Manager, confirmed Ms. Coleman's statement.

Marva Scott, Social Services Director, expressed lengthy concerns relative to the pay raise that was recommended for her by the Social Services Board of Directors not being granted, and, in addition, due to the stipulations stated by Mr. Farmer, she would not be eligible for a salary increase due to the length of her employment.

After discussion was conducted among the Board members, it was the general consensus of the Board not to grant any requested salary increases for anyone, over and above the new Pay Plan amount.

Establishment of Property Tax Rate:

After lengthy deliberation and discussion among the Board members relative to the property tax rate, a poll vote was taken on establishing the property tax rate at seventy-three (\$.73) cents, seventy-two (\$.72) cents and seventy-two and one-half (\$.725) cents, based on a ninety-six (96%) percent tax collection rate, with the following results:

\$.72 Property Tax Rate: Commissioners McKenzie and Prevatte

\$.725 Property Tax Rate: Commissioner Dutton

\$.73 Property Tax Rate: Chairman Jacobs, Vice Chairman Godwin (**by telephone**); Commissioners Memory and Norris.

The majority general consensus of four (4) was for a seventy-three (\$.73) cents property tax at a ninety-six (96%) percent tax collection rate.

Change in Date for 2 1/2% Discount on Property Tax:

Commissioner Dutton stated he had been approached by several farmers that have stated they would receive their money for the tobacco buyout in September, and wanted to know if the date for the two and one-half (2 ½%) percent discount on property tax could be changed to September instead of August. Richard Gore, Columbus County Tax Administrator, stated he did not know the answer to that, but would check into this matter and let the Board know.

Budget Workshop Closed:

At 8:15 P.M., Chairman Jacobs announced the Budget Workshop was closed.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

SAMMIE JACOBS, Chairman

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