

## COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

6:00 P.M.

The Columbus County Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting regarding the Columbus County Detention Addition Project on the above stated date and time in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex Building located at 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Sammie Jacobs, Chairman  
Kip Godwin, Vice Chairman  
Lynwood Norris  
Bill Memory  
James Prevatte  
Amon McKenzie

**COMMISSIONER ABSENT:**

David L. Dutton, Jr.

**APPOINTEES PRESENT:**

Jim Varner, Interim County Manager  
Steve Fowler, County Attorney  
Gail Edwards, Deputy Clerk

**APPOINTEES ABSENT:**

Darren Currie, Assist. County Manager  
Roxanne Coleman, Finance Officer  
June B. Hall, Clerk to Board

Chairman Jacobs called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. Commissioner Godwin gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Jacobs advised the purpose of this meeting is for consideration of a letter of intent to proceed or not proceed with building the jail and further advised this matter was tabled at their last meeting. Chairman Jacobs advised Jim Varner would give details and funding choices tonight.

Interim County Manager Jim Varner gave the following information:

1. We had a lengthy meeting Monday with the auditor and we are comfortable with the information;
2. The Local Government Commission is comfortable with us moving forward;
3. I would like to recommend that we send a letter of commitment;
4. Time runs out on Sunday;
5. Construction prices and gas prices are going up; it's really tough and we want them to have an opportunity to hopefully make a little profit or break even with us;
6. This is the reason for the urgency; and
7. I would like to make a recommendation that we send a letter of intent by Glenn Ware.

Commissioner Norris made a motion to approve with a second by Commissioner McKenzie. Commissioner Prevatte asked for discussion.

Commissioner Prevatte advised we had not decided on what size jail to build. Chairman Jacobs advised this is for the larger jail and Mr. Varner advised this is what he presented to them; the bid we came in with. He further advised we reduced it down to the figure we could work with within the Local Government Commission and the bank. Chairman Jacobs advised the 168 bed addition is what the letter of intent is for. Commissioner Memory asked for the final price and Mr. Varner advised \$8,548,863.00. Commissioner Memory added this is about a million dollars less and this will give us a full size jail just by changing from pre-cast to onsite concrete construction. Commissioner Memory asked Mr. Varner if this would be a strain on the general fund. Mr. Varner replied no, the auditor was very pleased and so was the Local Government Commission with what we came up with. Commissioner Prevatte asked Mr. Varner how will we fund this nearly \$2 million over budget. Mr. Varner advised from fund balance; looking at the overall budget we were capable of having an agreement with some department heads that let us have a little money, our fund balance will be in good shape. Commissioner Prevatte advised discussion was we may have to take from the fund balance and come back in a year and raise taxes. Mr. Varner replied no we are not going to raise taxes.

Vice Chairman Godwin thanked Mr. Varner for how he handled this; adding Mr. Varner wanted to make sure we did not get ourselves in a bind by looking at some options and getting with the auditors who are professionals. Vice Chairman Godwin further advised we have some receivables we have to collect and Mr. Varner is working on improving that and added he thinks that is very positive. Vice Chairman Godwin also advised he was very nervous about a \$2 million deficit in terms of what it's going to cost, but he feels a lot more comfortable about this knowing we are

going to pay for it out of reserves we have without the need to raise taxes. Mr. Varner advised it was an effort from staff and it gave him an opportunity to work with those folks. Mr. Varner also advised Steve Fowler is an asset; it is a great thing to have an attorney.

Commissioner Prevatte advised he is not opposed to a jail. The question was which of the options Darren had included in their package were they going to be able to take. Commissioner McKenzie thanked Mr. Varner for assisting him and advised it was really depressing getting this far, wondering where is the money going to come from. He is glad that through the leadership of the manager, attorney and staff, they found a way to get it done and it doesn't require raising any taxes in the future. Commissioner Memory added we are now building a bigger, better, more efficient, more secure jail than what we were going to build before.

Chairman Jacobs advised the question had been called for and asked all in favor say aye. All responded aye, with none opposed. The motion so carried.

Commissioner Memory then made a motion to adjourn at 6:11 P.M. with a second by Commissioner Norris. The motion so carried.

**APPROVED:**

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**GAIL EDWARDS, Deputy Clerk**

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**SAMMIE JACOBS, Chairman**