

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING and SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

**June 26, 2006
6:30 P.M.**

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time at the Riegelwood Community Center, 2694 General Howe Highway, Riegelwood, North Carolina, for the purpose of holding a Public Hearing, and a Special Called Meeting, both of which were duly advertised.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Kipling Godwin, **Chairman**
 Amon E. McKenzie
 James E. Prevatte
 Sammie Jacobs
 Bill Memory
 Lynwood Norris

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Jimmy Varner, **Interim County Manager**
 Steven W. Fowler, **County Attorney**
 June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

David L. Dutton, Jr., **Vice Chairman**

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

Roxanne Coleman, **Finance Officer**

OTHERS in ATTENDANCE:

Leo Green, **Engineer, Green Engineering**
 Leroy Sellers, **Public Utilities Director**
 Gail Edwards, **Executive Assistant**

6:30 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING:

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED to ORDER and INVOCATION:

At 6:30 P.M., Chairman Godwin called the duly advertised Public Hearing to order, and stated the purpose of this hearing was to receive comments, either oral or written, from anyone, regarding the extension of the boundaries of Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV.

Chairman Godwin requested Leo Green, each Board member, and each County Staff in attendance, to introduce themselves to the public, and they did likewise. Steven W. Fowler, Columbus County Attorney, informed the citizens of how this Public Hearing would be conducted. Mr. Fowler read the Policy on Comments at Public Hearings.

OVERVIEW from LEO GREEN, ENGINEER:

Chairman Godwin requested that Leo Green with Green Engineering present an overview of what this project would entail. Mr. Green stated the following:

1. Columbus County has been awarded \$5.6 million for the Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV;
2. When this district was initially established, there was an adequate number of customers who were interested, but would not agree to hookup to the water;
3. With the number of people who did agree to hookup to the water, there was not enough customers to make this district feasible for the citizens, or for Columbus County;
4. Columbus County has been notified by Rural Development that the \$5.6 million will be going back to the Federal government if it is not used in the near future;
5. I have been asked to extend the boundaries of Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV to include some densely populated areas of the County in order to make this district be feasible.

Commissioner Memory stated the following:

- I am going to provide you with some history and information about this district that you may

- not be aware of. At the time, this district was put together, there were more than adequate interested customers to make it pay for itself;
- When the time arrived for the people to agree to hookup to the system, we did not have enough customers to make the district work;
 - Columbus County has a total of \$5.6 million for this district, \$4.1 million in a loan and \$1.5 million in a grant;
 - We have been contacted by Rural Development that if we do not use this money in the near future, it will be returned to the Federal Government, and probably we will never see it again; **and**
 - Due to the problems we have experienced in Water Districts II and III, this Board is not willing to put these water pipes in the ground unless the system will pay for itself.

CONTINUED - LEO GREEN OVERVIEW:

6. On page one of the handout, you will see the proposed boundary lines for District IV;
7. On page two, you will see the proposed roads in this extension;
8. With the existing two (2) water systems in this area, and the customers on Fertilizer Road, this will provide the necessary count for this system to work;
9. We will be basing this water system on the existing average water bill for the existing two (2) systems which is thirty-six and 00/100 (\$36.00) dollars per month;
10. We are under a very short time line with Rural Development;
11. We will be using the state-of-the-art radio-read water meters which are more accurate;
12. The fire hydrants will pump five hundred (500) gallons of water per minute and a pumper truck will be able to hookup to them; **and**
13. The fire hydrants will be within five hundred (500') feet of a house.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chairman Godwin opened the floor for comments from the public. The following people spoke:

1. **Jack Matthis:** stated the following:
 - A. I live in the Riegelwood Sanitary District and our monthly water bill is only eight and 00/100 (\$8.00) dollars per month; **and**
 - B. We have been told that fire pumper trucks could not hookup to the fire hydrants in the existing districts because it would make the water line collapse, and did I understand you to say that a fire pumper truck could hookup to the fire hydrants in this district?

Mr. Green replied stating that six (6) months ago, the State passed a requirement that you must use fire hydrants that are capable of pumping the minimum of five hundred (500) gallons of water per minute, and this minimum capacity would allow the fire pumper trucks to hookup to the fire hydrants.

2. **Private Citizen (did not state name):** What about the telephone lines and cables that are already in the ground?

Mr. Green replied stating that these lines would have to be located by the said companies, and hopefully none will be disturbed, or, at least a minimum amount of disturbance.

3. **George Everette:** What about the twelve (12") inch line North, and I don't think the flat water bill is thirty-six and 00/100 (\$36.00) dollars.

Mr. Green replied stating the twelve (12") inch line north is buying its water from the Town of Northwest with a twenty-five thousand (25,000) gallon daily pumping capacity. At the present, there are eighty-six (86) users on this line. The minimum monthly water bill will be twenty-four and 00/100 (\$24.00) dollars for the first 2,000 gallons, but we have used a monthly average amount of thirty-six and 00/100 (\$36.00) dollars, and this is due to the fact that most families fall within this range of water usage.

4. **Tommy Justice:** What is the initial tapon fee?

Jim Varner, Interim County Manager, replied stating that as of July 01, 2006, the tapon fee

would be five hundred and 00/100 (\$500.00) dollars for a three-quarter (3/4") inch, seven hundred fifty and 00/100 (\$750.00) dollars for a one (1") inch, and one thousand and 00/100 (\$1,000.00) dollars for a two (2") inch.

5. **Glen Evans:** Can the tapon fee be paid over a period of time or do you have to pay it all at once?

Leroy Sellers, Public Utilities Director, stated that it needed to be paid up front.

Jim Varner, Interim County Manager, stated a payment schedule could be worked up for the tapon fee.

6. **Private Citizen (did not state name):** Where do you pay the bills at?

Leroy Sellers, Public Utilities Director, stated the water bills could be paid by U.S. mail, at the Public Utilities Office, or on line.

7. **Wanda Brown:** Will Riegelwood have the opportunity to be included?

Mr. Green stated that at the present, the Riegelwood Sanitary District is not included because they have a system of their own. It would help District IV if they would decide to be a part of this district.

8. **Eugenia Brown:** How was it determined where these water lines would go.

Mr. Green replied stating that he traveled the roads and did house counts, and this was based on a density of seventeen (17) to eighteen (18) houses per mile. There is one area where this density was not found, but it was feasible to be included in order to connect the areas.

9. **Ken Medlin:** What about Goose Neck Road? There is a heavy concentration of houses on this road.

Mr. Green replied stating that Goose Neck Road was not included, but out of the \$5.6 Million, he did the drawings based on \$4 Million, and the system could expand to include other areas, if justified.

10. **Annette Williams:** The Town of Sandyfield wants more information on this water system.

11. **Ila Mae Flynn:** What about Justin Flynn Road and Neils Eddy Road?

Mr. Green replied stating they had not been included.

12. **Private Citizen (did not state name):** Why was Prosper Road not offered?

Mr. Green replied stating that it was either the density needed wasn't there, or it was a road that he did not travel.

Commissioner Memory stated that after this system gets started, and if another road should become feasible and workable, then it will be added to the system.

13. **Ronald _____:** Did you include Delco-Prosper Road and Livingston Chapel Road?

Mr. Green replied stating no.

14. **J. R. Heath:** What about Wooded Acres?

Mr. Green replied stating that Wooded Acres was a part of this system.

15. **Private Citizen (did not state name):** Why are you extending Water District IV boundaries?

Mr. Green replied stating it was to utilize the funds from Rural Development before they had to be returned and possibly, would not be available in the future.

16. **Wanda Brown:** If this system does not pay for itself, are you going to impose taxes on everybody, or only on those who use the water?

Commissioner McKenzie replied stating that if this system would not pay for itself, then the water pipes would not be put into the ground. We learned a hard lesson with Water Districts II and III about this, and we will not let this happen again.

Commissioner Prevatte reiterated what Commissioner McKenzie stated regarding imposing taxes on the citizens of this district.

17. **Craig Gore:** Mr. Green, you stated that the County was buying twenty-five thousand (25,000) gallons of water, per day, from Northwest, and you stated there would a well placed in this district. Are you going to have to drill a well?

Mr. Green replied stating the water that was being purchased from Northwest is not enough to furnish this district, and we will be drilling a well. The average water usage per customer is being based on four thousand six hundred to five thousand five hundred (4,600 - 5,500) gallons per month.

18. **Eugenia Brown:** Why was Kaiser Road not included?

Mr. Green replied stating that based on the established criteria, it did not qualify.

19. **Floyd Flynn:** stated the following:

1. It has been stated that there would not be any taxes imposed on the citizens in this district to make it pay for itself **and**
2. Should the people that are here tonight, who are living on the roads that have not been included in this plan, vote?

After lengthy discussion was conducted, it was the decision of the Board for the people present tonight, who are living on the roads that have not been included in this plan, to **not** vote.

CONCLUSION:

Commissioner Memory reiterated the fact that if this money from Rural Development was not utilized in the near future, Columbus County would lose it, and may not be able to get any more grant money for this district.

Chairman Godwin stated that everyone had spoken wishing to do so, and stated a straw poll vote would be taken.

A straw poll vote was taken with the following results:

AYES: 25
NAYS: 2

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:

At 7:49 P.M., Chairman Godwin closed the Public Hearing.

8:03 P.M.

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING:

MEETING CALLED to ORDER:

At 8:03 P.M., Chairman Godwin called the Special Called Meeting to order. The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Amon E. McKenzie.

RECESS SPECIAL CALLED MEETING and enter into COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT IV BOARD MEETING:

At 8:05 P.M., Commissioner Memory made a motion to recess the Special Called Meeting and enter into a Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV Board Meeting, seconded by

Commissioner Jacobs. The motion unanimously carried.

This information will be recorded in Minute Book I for the Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV Board.

ADJOURN COLUMBUS COUNTY WATER and SEWER DISTRICT IV BOARD MEETING and resume SPECIAL CALLED MEETING:

At 8:07 P.M., Commissioner McKenzie made a motion to adjourn Columbus County Water and Sewer District IV Board Meeting and resume the Special Called Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Prevatte. The motion unanimously carried.

2006 - 2007 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Chairman Godwin requested that Jim Varner, Interim County Manager, to update the Board with any additional information about the Proposed 2006 - 2007 Columbus County Operating Budget. Mr. Varner stated the following:

1. I do not have any additional budget information for you;
2. I have discovered that we need a Reimbursement Resolution for the \$10 Million that was borrowed for the jail construction and Williams Township School; **and**
3. We have pulled out over \$4 Million from the Fund Balance to balance the budget.

Commissioner Prevatte stated the following:

1. We originally started with a \$2.8 Million deficit;
2. Since the starting point, we have added dollars back to the budget;
3. Why do we still have \$3.5 to \$4 Million deficit in the budget?; **and**
4. What kind of a tax increase would it take to cover this deficit?

Mr. Varner replied by stating, it would take a ten to twelve (\$.10 - \$.12) cents tax increase to cover this deficit.

Commissioner Memory stated the Board needed to establish a tax rate for the coming year that we can live with.

After additional discussion was conducted relative to the Proposed 2006 - 2007 Columbus County Operating Budget, it was the general consensus of the Board to recess this meeting until Wednesday, June 28, 2006, at 6:00 P.M., in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina, for further discussion and decisions.

RECESS SPECIAL CALLED MEETING:

At 8:35 P.M., Commissioner Memory made a motion to recess this Special Called meeting until Wednesday, June 28, 2006, at 6:00 P.M., in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex, 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina, for further discussion and decisions on the Proposed 2006 - 2007 Columbus County Operating Budget. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Norris and unanimously carried.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

KIPLING GODWIN, Chairman