

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP

Monday, June 08, 2009

6:30 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 holding a Budget Workshop.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

James E. Prevatte **Chairman**
Amon E. McKenzie
Giles E. Byrd
Edwin Russ
Lynwood Norris
Ronald Gore

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

William S. Clark, **County Manager**
Terri L. Martin, **Interim County Attorney**
June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**
Bobbie Faircloth, **Finance Officer**

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

Ricky Bullard, **Vice Chairman**

MEETING CALLED to ORDER:

At 6:30 P.M., Chairman Prevatte called the Budget Workshop to order, and stated the following:

Workshop meetings differ from regular board meetings in the following two (2) respects:

- the meeting is to inform the board and permit discussion, no final action is taken; **and**
- the procedures are less official than at a regular meeting.

Such meetings are part of the decision-making process, deliberations are going on, and therefore, they constitute "official meetings".

PURPOSE of BUDGET WORKSHOP:

Chairman Prevatte stated the purpose of this Budget Workshop is to have dialogue with the County Manager and the County Finance Officer regarding the Proposed 2009 - 2010 Columbus County Operating Budget.

INVOCATION:

The invocation was delivered by Commissioner Amon E. McKenzie.

PROCEDURE for BUDGET WORKSHOP:

The procedure we will follow in this Budget Workshop will be to allow each Commissioner one (1) question each time until all seven (7) members have delivered their question, and until the time is reached that all members have asked all the questions of their choosing.

CORRECTED BUDGET WORKSHEETS:

- Bobbie Faircloth, Finance Director, stated the following;
1. You have been given some corrected Budget Worksheets;
 2. The first is the ad valorem taxes;
 3. In the Finance Office Budget, the salaries were decreased by removing a promotion for one of my staff members to Deputy Finance officer;
 4. The non-departmental, there was a correction in the EDC Development Center Grant;
 5. Law Enforcement Center - increase in the cost for the meals for the inmates;
 6. Contingency accounts for reductions in other line items
 7. Health Department - removal of 2.5% COLA that they had originally budgeted; **and**
 8. Tax Revaluation - their system is fixing to go out and they are trying to replace this in the coming year.

QUESTIONS and REPLIES:

1. **Commissioner Gore:** why the increase in salaries? Bobbie Faircloth and Mr. Clark replied stating the 2.5% COLA that was given last year was in a separate line item and has been added to the appropriate department.
2. **Commissioner Byrd:** in the Budget Message, why are the water rates different in water districts? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating this was due to different types of financing in water districts, but she would check into this further.

After discussion was conducted, it was the general consensus of the Board to have this matter checked into to see if the rate could be the same for each water district.
3. **Commissioner Russ:** my concern is Parks and Recreation being cut. We need this activity to keep our children off the street. The Columbus County Jail is understaffed and their radio system is insufficient for what they need.
4. **Commissioner Norris:** Mr. Clark has done what we asked him to do and has balanced the budget. I am satisfied with this budget.
5. **Chairman Prevatte:** On Page 27, Economic Development Incentives/Grants is showing \$967,075. Is this one of the corrections you were referring to? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating yes, and the corrected amount is \$231,085.
6. **Commissioner Gore:** On Page 24, Departmental Supplies went from \$23,796 to \$69,383 and in other departments, there is a sizable increase. Bobbie Faircloth replied stating on Page 24, there is a May primary, a possible special election and a second primary, and the election in November for the municipalities.
Commissioner Gore: Is that why Salaries/Wage - P/T went from \$5,000 to \$88,000, plus? Mr. Clark replied stating that the State has mandated that we can no longer use contracted labor, we must use part-time employees.
Chairman Prevatte: Will you check some of the line items on the supplies to find out why the sizable increase?
Commissioner Gore: Travel has increased from \$10,020 to \$15,079. Bobbie Faircloth replied stating that the director has listed the number of training conferences needed for staff and other conferences that need to be attended. Mr. Clark stated that he could check into the sizable increase and the reason for Staff Development.
7. **Commissioner McKenzie:** Page 64 - Line Item #10-3510-430037 shows a significant decrease, and why is this? Mr. Clark replied stating that most of these services will be done through Medicaid or local matches.
8. **Commissioner Byrd:** In the Budget Message, why are we transferring funds from the water districts? Mr. Clark replied stating that is to cover indirect costs.
9. **Chairman Prevatte:** Page 86 - Environmental Health Expenditures, why no capital outlay this year and \$14,500 next year? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating this is to replace software.
10. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 26 - Floodplain Mapping Fund, why nothing budgeted last year and we have \$9,000 this year? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating that this started last year and it is a wash.
11. **Commissioner Byrd:** Throughout the budget, it is showing salary longevity and please explain this, and retiree insurance. Mr. Clark replied stating that salary longevity was a one-time amount, after five (5) years, on your anniversary date, based on a percentage of your annual salary. On retiree insurance, you must change the Personnel Policy to change this.
12. **Chairman Prevatte:** Page 94 - Fire, Rescue, EMS \$3,000, what is this. Bobbie Faircloth replied stating this is where they give TB shots using their personnel, and get reimbursed from the Fire and Rescue Association.
13. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 29 Professional Services - Other, budgeted \$10,000 last year and now budgeting \$46,525, what is this? Ms. Faircloth replied stating this is for indirect cost for Maximus.

14. **Commissioner Byrd:** I have seen a freeze on hiring, and I understood that was for all positions including vacancies. Mr. Clark replied stating that we require the Department Heads to justify why they need that position.
15. **Commissioner Prevatte:** Page 101 - County Schools Current Expense \$4,473,306. Mr. Clark and I discussed this and we are restoring the 3% cut from last year.
16. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 75 - Contracted Services \$1,465,732 increase, what is this. Mr. Clark replied stating this is for contract nurses for home health. Bobbie Faircloth stated this does not include any county money.
17. **Commissioner McKenzie:** Page 106 - CCAVE - does this still exist? Chairman Prevatte replied stating yes.
Commissioner McKenzie: American Legion 137 has been taken out, and I would like for it to be put back in. After discussion was conducted, it was the general consensus for this to be put back into the budget at last year's amount of \$2,550.
18. **Commissioner Byrd:** Page 106 - Rent-Whiteville Depot \$14,040, do we use it that much? Vietnam Veterans of America - no amount listed. Mr. Clark replied stating we had a contract with the City of Whiteville for the Depot and that is our half, and the Vietnam Veterans of America was for the moving wall last year.
19. **Commissioner Russ:** Page 106 - Waccamaw River Debris Removal, what is this? Chairman Prevatte replied stating this was for contract work to clean out Waccamaw River and should be completed.
20. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 106 - Lumber River Council of Governments, what constituted this? Mr. Clark replied stating that the Board apparently approved this several years ago, and this is where the Lumber River Council of Governments studies water issues in our area, the aquifers, test wells, it is a concerted effort of the Lumber River COG to make sure we have adequate water and that we are being pro-active on our water usage, water quality and water capacity in southeastern North Carolina. There were two (2) assessments done for a total of \$6,300. This is the first year of billing.
21. **Commissioner Gore:** We are charging every water district for uniforms in the amount of \$1,500, and that is too much. Mr. Clark stated that we will go back and look at that, it looks like a duplication.
22. **Commissioner Byrd:** Why are our employees driving four-wheel drives when they don't need them, and these type vehicles are more expensive to purchase and more expensive to maintain? Mr. Clark replied stating that this could be changed.
23. **Chairman Prevatte:** Why do we have uniform costs at the Health Department? Chairman Prevatte stated that they get an allocation at the Health Department for their uniforms. I really don't think the employees should get an allocation for uniforms. Mr. Clark stated that the cost for uniforms at the Health Department had been taken out this year.
24. **Commissioner Gore:** Water Districts - Pages 145, 149 and 153 - Principal Lease on Vehicles - that looks like a duplication. What are we leasing here? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating this was for two (2) new vehicles they got this year.
25. **Commissioner Russ:** What about the employees that have already retired and then coming back to work? Mr. Clark replied stating that after you had been employed five (5) years with the county, you are fully vested in the State Retirement System, and each employee is required to pay into the retirement system.
26. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 155 - Transportation Expenditures - Capital Outlay - this has increased from \$157,266 to \$217,850. Mr. Clark replied stating that all of that money comes from the State, none of it is our money. Chairman Prevatte stated that due to the Stimulus Package, Transportation did not have to come up with the 10% match.
27. **Commissioner McKenzie:** Due to the fine job that Mr. Clark has done putting this budget together, it is hard to find many questions to ask. Mr. Clark has executed all the requests that

we have requested him to do. I think it is a good budget and with the few corrections stated here tonight, it is time for us to adopt it.

28. **Commissioner Byrd:** Page 157 - Salaries/Wages - P/T - \$89,738 - Why the big difference between 2007-08 and 2009-10? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating this was for the Solid Waste Convenience Center Sites.
Page 157 - Solid Waste Disposal Fees - \$123,060 - What is this? Bobbie Faircloth replied stating that is the tax they have that came into effect this year where they pay \$2.93 per tonnage going over the scale to Sampson County and there is also a revenue line item to offset part of this cost.
Page 157 - Contracted Services \$5,517,970 - I see where this has decreased some. Chairman Prevatte replied stating that is a contract that I negotiated with Waste Management. Part of that has the fuel built into it. We got a lesser amount for a gate fee in the negotiation.
Page 157 - Contract-Fuel Surcharge - Is this in the deal? Chairman Prevatte replied stating the Contracted Services is for picking up and tipping, and the Contract Fuel Surcharge is the other part.
Page 157 - Contracted Services-Tire Disposal - Chairman Prevatte replied stating this is for the disposal of used tires in the county.
29. **Commissioner Russ:** Recycling - I have a small recycling cardboard business and I am getting into plastic recycling. I could pay the county for the cardboard and plastic they are disposing of and keep this from going to a landfill.
30. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 44:- Emergency Services Expenditures - There are large increases in Travel, Telephone, Road Signs, Rental and Disaster Funds. Bobbie Faircloth replied stating that these increases are due to the changes in the 911 law in how the funds can be used.
31. **Commissioner Byrd:** Why are we adding the 3% cut back into the budget at a time like this? Mr. Clark replied stating he was comfortable with the cost in this budget, and if a cut is necessary at a later date, I think the departments could do that.
32. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 46 - Fire Marshal Expenditures - Why is the large increase in Departmental Supplies, Travel, Telephone and Disaster Funds? Mr. Clark replied stating this budget is for a full-time Fire Marshall.
33. **Commissioner Byrd:** Looking at the budget, I will say that it is a good budget, but it is my opinion that we need to hold back the 3% that is included in the budget as a safety valve.
34. **Commissioner Gore:** Page 53 - Airport Expenditures - Multiple lines of Improvements, is there money for that? Mr. Clark replied stating that is all grant money with county matches. Comments: This has been the best budget I have ever worked with, I am pleased with this budget, you have done a good job, but I do agree with Commissioner Byrd about taking the 3% reduction out for a safety valve, and we need to lower the solid waste fee that has been increased for the benefit of our high population of senior citizens on fixed incomes.
35. **Chairman Prevatte:** This is the best budget I have worked on in five (5) years, you have done a good job, this budget is easy to understand. Is this Board ready to move on or go back with all the department heads like we have in the past? If you are comfortable enough, I will place the adoption of this budget on the June 15, 2009 Agenda.

BUDGET WORKSHOP CLOSED:

At 8:19 P.M., Chairman Prevatte declared the Budget Workshop adjourned.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

JAMES E. PREVATTE, Chairman