

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET INPUT SESSION, MAY 13, 1998

The Board of Commissioners (the "Board") of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in special session for the purpose of receiving public comment on the Manager's Recommended Budget in the North Chatham Elementary, Pittsboro, North Carolina, at 7:00 PM on May 13, 1998.

Present: Chairman Margaret Pollard; Vice Chairman Betty Wilson;
Commissioners Uva Holland, John Grimes and Henry
Dunlap; County Manager Charlie Horne; and Assistant
County Manager, Reneé Dickson, and Finance Officer,
Vicki McConnell

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:00 P.M.

Margaret Pollard, Chair, welcomed those in attendance.

Charlie Horne, County Manager, presented an over view of the Fiscal Year 1999 Recommended Budget.

Reneé Dickson, Assistant County Manager, reviewed the budget process, Commissioner priorities, the budget-at-a-glance, and proposed new positions in the County.

Vicki McConnell, Finance Officer, reviewed County revenue projections and fund balance.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Chatham County Sheriff's Department and Jail

Don Whitt, Chatham County Sheriff explained the mission of the Sheriff's Department, major projects, activities, new programs, his request for two new community deputies, six replacement vehicles, and supplies and training for the Special Incident Response Team (SIRT).

PUBLIC WORKS

Jeff Hughes, Public Works Director, reviewed the Public Works' two major areas:

Water Resources Management – Water treatment plant, bulk purchase, expenses/revenues, new projects and programs

Solid Waste Management – Services, expenses/revenues, transfers from General Fund, new projects and programs

Charlie Horne, County Manager, explained the education budget, the Board of Education's mission statement, their budget request, trends in funding, student population, and regional assessment of funding.

Public Input Session

Ellen Miller, 2283 NC Hwy. #751, Apex, NC, President of the North Chatham PTA stated that at its opening, North Chatham Elementary School had 480 students which grew to 930 at one point; that this created a great strain on facilities and instructors; that requests to the PTA have been urgent and sizeable; that now North Chatham is operating at capacity; and that the Board of Commissioners needs to be proactive in dealing with this growth.

Craig Solomon, 13, Polks Landing, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that as a parent with two children attending Perry Harrison School and member of the PTA Advisory Board, he feels that he has a good idea of the needs of the school system and how they are not being met. He stated that he is proud of the way the schools performed last year with two rated in the top twenty-five in the State in academic growth, six out of ten exhibiting exemplary growth, and the remaining four showing expected growth; that he is concerned about the proposed County budget, which based upon a formula, projects spending approximately \$500,000 less this year than what was spent last year; that the school board was denied its requested budget last year and was asked to spend their fund balance to meet their needs; and that he was concerned that education was omitted from the Commissioners' list of priorities

He read a list of the top ten priorities of each Chatham County school which he stated was compiled by site based improvement teams consisting of principals, teachers, specialists, and parents, attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof. He stated that he does not understand why every time something for the schools needs to be done, that a property tax increase is recommended; that with an increase in tax revenue due to an increase in property tax values, he does not understand why the schools did not get part of it; that the amount of money being held in reserve funds such as the general fund balance, capital outlay fund balance, waste management fund balance and utility fund balance appears to have approximately eleven million dollars; that this amount of money does not justify the fact of withholding basic needs from the children; that he had rather spend money now for the schools than to spend it later in the form of prisons, homeless shelters, and social programs. He encouraged the Finance Staff, School Board, and Superintendent to work out a more appropriate plan for the children's future.

Owen Crankshaw, 215 Tanager Lane, Chapel Hill, NC, presented a letter to the North Chatham School principal from a math teacher regarding class sizes in various County schools. He stated that class size at North Chatham is on average 15% higher than others in the County; that additional funding will help put an end to oversized classes, combined classes, and provide for additional special programs that are needed; and that the Board of Education and the school superintendent need to look more carefully at the needs of individual schools.

Cheri Klein, 1718 Bynum Ridge Road, Pittsboro, NC, media specialist at North Chatham School, stated that North Chatham is K-8 for the first time this year; that the addition of middle school kids present a new set of needs for the school; that increased class size and decreasing programs particularly affect the at-risk kids; and that the Board of Commissioners should look beyond the funding formula to provide the proper funding level for the schools.

Ray Greenlaw, 2 Jordan Drive, Pittsboro, NC, informed the Board that the Water Advisory Committee will be concluding their rate study next Thursday and asked the Board to consider their findings early in the budget work session schedule to allow ample time to reach a decision.

Bettie Toma, 664 Lewter Shop, Apex, NC, stated that it is long overdue for an increase in teacher supplements and bus driver salaries; and that the school has lost enough bus drivers and teachers already.

Nancy Easterling, 921 Boothe Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that the funding of the schools was a very serious issue; that she would ask the Board to realize that the requested level of funding will pay for basic needs; and that these basic needs should be met; and that education should be the highest priority on the list.

Robert Grant, 21 Fearington Post, Pittsboro, NC, presented four points for the Board to consider: 1) Validity of the tax rate argument; that if we keep our tax rate down below the levels of Orange and Durham Counties, why do we not

have the industry they do; 2) The funding formula is not working if parents are required to contribute large amounts of money, and population projections are too low; 3) Funding is needed to prevent future problems; that building up a reserve fund is economically not viable; and 4) Why is it satisfactory for parents to buy essential items for the schools when we do not require it in other areas the County funds.

Sharon Bynum, P.O. Box 422, Pittsboro, NC, stated that she was an ISS teacher at North Chatham School and is concerned that she will lose her job if funding levels are not maintained at the requested amount; that the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education need to revisit their mission, and truly think of the children first; that any member of the Board of Commissioners should visit a school in the County on any given day to see first hand how the schools operate.

Sandy Tillman, President, Chatham Education Foundation, stated that she would like to see education added to the list of Commissioner priorities.

Rob Fisher, stated that the budget process should be revisited and that the current process leads to pitfalls.

Melrose Fisher, stated that after she became involved in the schools, she became frustrated at a lack of resources available to teachers; that kids today come to school with much more baggage than they have in the past; and that smaller class size is essential to helping these children.

John Wagner, stated that the County should dip into their surplus and give the school what they requested; that the County should spend it, then take it to the voters and ask them to help make up the difference.

Jeanne Bishop, Principal, North Chatham School, thanked the Board of Commissioners for giving parents the opportunity to speak out about the schools and listening to their concerns.

Susan Helmer, Board of Education member, stated that the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education do have a good working relationship; that they have learned from mistakes of the past and have made progress in the process this year.

Chairman Pollard thanked everyone for attending the meeting to voice their concerns and show their concern for education.

The Chair announced that a meeting with the Chatham County Legislative Delegation would be held on Thursday, May 21st at 4:00 in Jennie's Board Room, Fearington House to discuss education issues.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Grimes moved, seconded by Commissioner Holland, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried five(5) to zero(0), and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Margaret Bryant Pollard, Chair

ATTEST:

Sandra B. Lee, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners