

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION, MAY 30, 2001

The Board of Commissioners (“the Board”) of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Jordan Matthews High School Auditorium, 910 East Cardinal Street, Siler City, North Carolina, at 7:00 PM on May 30, 2001.

Present: Chair Gary Phillips; Vice Chair Margaret Pollard, Commissioners Bob Atwater, Rick Givens, and Carl Outz; County Manager, Charlie Horne; County Attorney, Robert L. Gunn; Assistant County Manager, Paul Spruill; and Finance Officer, Vicki McConnell

The Chairman welcomed those in attendance and the meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

Billie Wilson, address unknown, stated that he is on disability and cannot stand a tax rate of 75 cents. He stated that his house is not worth what the tax office says its worth, and that he just wanted to voice his opinion.

Mary Francis Davis, 893 Harold Andrews Rd. Siler City, stated that she is a widow, and that her land is landlocked and not worth the \$10,845 that the tax office says it is. She stated that the other two properties she owns are not valued accurately either, and that there is no way, on a fixed income, that she can pay taxes on these parcels of land.

Bunkey Morgan, 1970 Martha’s Chapel Rd, Apex, NC, stated that Keith Megginson, Planning Director, had asked the Planning Board to approve the Planning Department’s budget two weeks after he had submitted it to Mr. Horne; that he did not understand this; that a 50 cent rate would be equal to last year; that he does not understand how we are experiencing an Administration decrease when we are spending \$300,000 more next year than was spent last year. He asked for a budget of 60 cents or less.

Louise Adcock, 116 White Oak Drive, Siler City, NC, spoke of a 100 percent increase in her property. She stated that she disapproves of a proposed park at Jordan Lake, and would favor a park comparable to a YMCA in the center of the County. She asked for the lowest rate that could possibly be put forward.

Phillip Johnson, 1329 Hal Clark Road, Siler City, NC, stated that he was flabbergasted by a 25 percent increase annual raise for any employee; that he was concerned that if the line is not held to the budget from last year, the Board will continue to feed the County Manager and his organization. He mentioned that he is the vice president of finance for a company; that they have cut back; and that he expects the same of County government.

Jim Jones, 229 East Second St, Siler City, NC, stated that he recognized the difficulty of the Commissioner’s jobs, and that he thought the rate had increased every year in recent years. He pointed out the benefit of educating the public to spend in Chatham so that the County could benefit from the two percent that comes back to Chatham. He asked the Board to hold the line.

Jessie Albright, 1423 Coleridge Road, Siler City, NC, stated that he bought the cheapest land he could find in 1953. He says it is more valuable as a result of the valuation than he ever expected, and that he got rich overnight. He stated that he was concerned that as a result of his appeal he was credited only \$500. He stated that the County salaries are too high, and that he cannot afford to pay the proposed tax bill.

Chris Carter, 444 West North Street, Siler City, NC, speaking on behalf of Habitat for Humanity, explained what Habitat for Humanity does and how they select the homeowners who will benefit. He informed the Board that one hundred residents had been served with twenty-eight homes built over the past ten years. He stated that habitat would like to construct seven homes per year beginning in 2003 and into the future. He cited affordable housing as a problem, given that 20 percent of Chatham citizens earn less than the median family income.

Hank Wilson, 2842 Siler City-Glendon Road, Siler City, NC, stated that he has worked in politics for forty-five years; that he worked hard. Stated he has worked in politics for 45 years and he worked hard recently for some of our Commissioners and he is disappointed. Says the Commissioners are working for themselves and other politicians. He wonders who approves these big bills for land and other purchases. He wonders when work will begin on the Siler City industrial park. He asked citizens to work hard during the next election. He cited government waste in the size of the Sheriff's Dept vehicles.

Roy Coltrane, Poe Road, Siler City, NC, stated that Says he doesn't pay taxes to State or Federal because he doesn't make enough money. He asked the Commissioners to come up and make him a budget.

Karl Ernst, 711 White Oak Drive, Siler City, NC, stated that Cited history of no taxation without representation and wonders if property could have been valued in a way other than market value. Cited frustration with the slow strategic planning process. Asked if we have recourse for the lack of intangibles tax reimbursement.

Richard Peter, Bear Creek, NC, discussed the risk he took to make his land into a viable business. He cited displeasure with the Siler City industrial park, and stated that farmers are what make up Chatham County.

Mike Holt, 2195 Wade Pascal Road, Siler City, NC, cited precedence that other counties have set in cutting expenditures. He asked the Commissioners to challenge Chatham management to cut expenditures.

T. C. Yarborough, 1205 West Third Street, Siler City, NC, stated that as a resident of Siler City, taxes for both of his governmental entities go up. He asked that the Commissioners look closely at the County Budget and the school's budget to make cuts. He cited a problem associated with the special assistants assigned to disabled students, and asked the County Commissioners to work with the Board of Education.

Terry Andrews, 418 Pine Lake Drive, Siler City, NC, stated that he has a small business in town, but wanted to speak of his past experience as the President of the Chamber of Commerce. He asked the Commissioners to work hard to cut their budgets like surrounding counties have done.

Marian Norton, 8481 NC Hwy. #902, Pittsboro, NC, asked that the percentage of property value be held to a minimum. She mentioned the unfairness in taxing property at market value if market value includes the labor to build a home and the fee to sell a home. She spoke of misspent funds from JOCCA, and stated that the proposed tax rate is a burden.

Don Matthews, address unknown, pointed out that those using parks are not taxpayers. He asked the citizens to take their cause to the polls.

John Ward, 1313 Charlie Cooper Road, Staley, NC, spoke with regard to the Board of Education. He asked citizens to vote more carefully for school board members, and asked that citizens help improve the leadership of the school system.

Joe Burke, 125 Mt. Gilead Church Road, Pittsboro, NC, spoke of his pride associated with the teacher and students recognized prior to the meeting. He asked that the Board hold to a high standard of accountability. He read a list of what "FACT" stands for, and asked the Board to consider what it needs rather than what it wants.

Raymond Johnson, 1336 Hal Clark Road, Siler City, NC, thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak from the west side of the County. He stated that the County Administrator is overpaid with his recent \$16,000 raise, and asked why the County has three assistants since creating a new assistant position this past winter.

Robert Johnson, 1460 Hal Clark Road, Siler City, NC, thanked Commissioners Givens and Outz for their remarks. He stated that they need to be annexed to Randolph County since it is a more conservative County government; that he believes that the revaluation is unfair and does not serve the purpose of equalizing property; that the proposed tax rate is unacceptable and under the old valuation, it would mean an increase from 85 cents to one dollar and nine cents; that the County Manager's office is overstaffed; and that it is now up to the County Commissioners to do something about it.

Don Tarkington, 341 Pinelit Drive, Siler City, NC, stated that economic troubles have come to the western part of the County. He asked the County to do more with less, and indicated that future increases in spending should be based entirely on natural growth.

Sam White, 145 Maverick Ranch Road, Pittsboro, NC, spoke predominantly to the crowd and reconstructed his experience with the Jimmy Collins firing. He gave Commissioner Outz credit for representing the people, and asked how many folks remember where they were three months ago tonight. He asked citizens to remember these actions eighteen months from now for the elections. He stated that he means no offense, but that he would like to get across the fact that there is no job description for the County Manager and the budget needs to be cut at the top. He asked folks to vote at the next election.

Terry White, 145 Maverick Ranch Road, Pittsboro, NC, pointed out that Chatham County has been democratic for 150 years. She quoted Jefferson as saying any government big enough to give you everything you need is big enough to take everything you have. She recognized that discrimination exists and stated that it is an abomination. She referred to the historical experience of many ethnic groups who work hard for what they have. She stated that she wants public assistance monitored carefully. She credited the speaker from Habitat for Humanity.

Elizabeth Dixon, 2861 Mt. Vernon Springs Road, Siler City, NC, asked that her property value be reduced as a result of chicken manure that is spread on land next to her house. She suggested a 50 cent tax rate, and asked that the rest be put into a sales tax. She went on to complain that the \$500,000 from JOCCA was misappropriated, and stated that she would like to know where the money went.

Glenn Dunn, 115 Willis Dunn Road, Bear Creek, NC, apologized for references to puppets at the previous night's meeting. He discussed progress made recently at OPC Mental Health as a result of a competent financial director. He cited a problem associated with citizens losing trust and faith in their local

government, and asked that the new revaluation be thrown out. He thanked the Commissioners for taking the abuse that they do. He suggested appointing a few County citizens to look at for the missing money and the missing marijuana.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chairman Phillips cited the staff revenue neutral number at 63 cents and asked those who believe it is 50-59 cents to get together with the County in order to arrive at the answer.

Commissioner Pollard expressed pride in the County's Finance Office for receiving the highest award offered by GFOA for accounting practices.

Commissioner Atwater reiterated his desire to listen to citizen input and balance it against what he learns during the budget process.

Commissioner Givens repeated his commitment to a 59 cent tax rate after taking into account revenue losses on vehicles and assuming the state comes through with funds.

Commissioner Outz suggested a 59 cent rate would amount to a 23-24 percent increase. He asked the County to live within its budget.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

Gary Phillips, Chairman

ATTEST:

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