

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
MAY 23, 2011

The Board of Commissioners (“the Board”) of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Central Carolina Community Multipurpose Room, 764 West Street, located in Pittsboro, North Carolina, at 6:00 PM on May 23, 2011.

Present: Chairman Brian Bock; Vice Chair Walter Petty;
Commissioners Mike Cross, Sally Kost, and Pamela Stewart

Staff Present: Charlie Horne, County Manager; Renee Paschal, Assistant
County Manager; and Sandra B. Sublett, Clerk to the Board

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Cross delivered the invocation after which Chairman Bock invited everyone present to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair welcomed everyone in attendance and called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

BUDGET PRESENTATION

FY 2011-2012 Recommended Budget Presentation: Presentation of the recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2010-2011

Charlie Horne, County Manager, stated that Chatham County continues to be in sound financial condition. He stated that the forthcoming recommendations come in a climate of uncertainty. Both the federal and state budget work continues. This budget has been created in that environment stating that they feel that the outcome of those budgets will affect the County, they just don’t know how. They have tried to prepare as best they could in that uncertainty. The economy continues to drag. While we are seeing a rise in economic indicators, it is not flat-line, but it is not a sharp rise. It is a gradual economic situation that we currently see. It is a difficult time for creating this budget. He thanked the department leaders for their responsiveness to the budget requirements. They targeted the proposed cuts that were then carefully reviewed and with minor exceptions, were approved. He thanked the Finance Officer, Assistant County Manager, and Budget Analyst for “bulldogging” the budget which has been an arduous process.

He reviewed specifics of the budget and explained that the General Fund Budget totals \$82,883,972; Waste Management Fund totals \$3,023,413; Water Fund budget totals \$5,613,094; that staff is recommending no tax increase, no change at 62.19 cents; that one penny generates \$851,761; the property values total \$8.8 billion; that anticipated property tax revenue would be \$54,045,000; and that the General Fund Fund Balance appropriated is \$775,052.

Renee Paschal, Assistant County Manager, presented a PowerPoint of the FY 2012 Recommended Budget. She reviewed the budget process, economic conditions, new commitments, mandated services, revenue highlights, major funds, expansion, improvements to the budget document, Commissioners’ goals, fund balance, the Capital Improvements Program, Chatham County Schools, and non-profit agencies. The PowerPoint presented by Ms. Paschal is identical to the PowerPoint presented at the May 16, 2011 Board of Commissioners’ meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chair opened the floor for public comments.

Ardith Pugh, 462 Beechmast, Fearington, Pittsboro, NC, stated that was present to speak on behalf of the bookmobile. Not everyone living in North Chatham, she stated, is wealthy and often the bookmobile is their only contact with the library. Frequently these people will combine tasks and errands. She has seen neighbors come in with a list of books for people who are unable to come to the bookmobile. She has substitute taught at Perry Harrison and some kids' first contact with the library system is the bookmobile. As gas prices increase, distance is a factor and impacts people's budgets. She asked that the Board keep in mind that the bookmobile is the library to many residents.

Ruth Lucier, 215 Bynum Road, Pittsboro, NC, stated that she is a long term taxpayer in Chatham County and that she is grateful not to be overburdened. She stated that she that she is concerned that the environment is not the top priority of the sitting board. She grew up in California and saw environmental disaster. They balanced the budget by compromising the environment. It resulted in bad air and water quality. The one way to protect Chatham is to make sure the new reorganization does not reduce the hours that staff will spend overseeing developments. She stated that Bynum has had its share of problems and that she would hate to see that continue.

Allison Weakley, 175 Lauren Rose Lane, Pittsboro, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

"Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed FY 2011-2012 budget. My comments address specifically the proposed budget for Natural Resource Management that considers the elimination of the Environmental Resource Department (ER Dept.) and reorganization toward an Environmental Services Department headed by the current Director of Waste Management.

Natural resources are an asset in Chatham County – they provide ecosystem and economic services, and a quality of life that draws people to live and thrive here. These assets are also very attractive to businesses looking to locate in an area – they are an economic draw. The recently completed Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Chatham County provides a wealth of information on our important natural resources, and highlights in particular four major categories of public resources: wildlife habitat, working lands (farmland and forestry), recreation, and water resources (see www.chathamconservation.wikispaces.org). Our natural resources are a key component to our current and future vitality and prosperity, especially in a state and region that is expected to grow tremendously in the next few decades. Chatham County has become known statewide as a county that not only cares about our natural resources and our future, but takes action to ensure that our assets are considered in our decision-making. Chatham County serves a model of natural resource leadership for other counties in North Carolina.

As you know, the Environmental Review Board (ERB) was created in 2007 to:

- Establish minimum level "triggers" for environmental impact assessments to be required by the Board of Commissioners for proposed developments.
- Provide peer review of any environmental impact assessments produced for the Board of Commissioners. The review reports would be provided to the Planning Board, Division of Environmental Health and the Board of Commissioners.
- Advise the Board of Commissioners on environmental policy and related county ordinances, including the watershed ordinance.
- Review any required state and federal environmental permits for projects in the county and monitor information resulting from this process.
- Partner with towns in the county and other interested governmental agencies on mutual concerns related to the environment.

- Conduct special projects, as needed, to protect the environment.

That same year (2007), the Environmental Resources Department (ER Dept.) was created, and a Director for the ER Dept. was hired. The ERB and ER Dept. have worked together – effectively and efficiently - for the past 4.5 years to establish a process that incorporates environmental review into the county development process, develop science-based policies and regulations that are protective of Chatham County’s natural resources, and provide recommendations and advice to the Commissioners, Planning Board, citizens, developers, and others.

The ER Director, as county staff, in particular serves an essential role in the conservation and protection of our natural resources. This position is not just primarily focused on requirements for water quality permitting. The ER Director currently provides a high level of service and expertise for customers seeking permits and approvals, but also oversees a variety of other facets of natural resource protection and management that require expertise, experience, and coordination that cannot be sustained under the current reorganization proposal in the budget.

For example, three major tasks currently undertaken by the ER Director may be greatly affected by the proposed reorganization and elimination of this position:

1. **Stormwater Administration.** A Professional Engineer (PE) is required to administer the stormwater requirements of the Jordan Lake Stormwater Rules. The county MUST write a draft ordinance by September 2011 and deliver it and a new stormwater program proposal to the NC Division of Water Quality (DWQ). And the Commissioners must review and endorse it first. How will this happen if the ER Director, who has been instrumental in ensuring Chatham County is compliance, is eliminated? The requirements of the Jordan Lake Stormwater rules, including stormwater education and Stage 1 and Stage 2 requirements, is going to take considerable staff time, resulting in less staff in the field and dealing with customers. The Jordan Lake Rules also require annual reporting of Total Nitrogen (TN), Total Phosphorous (TP), impervious surface, BMP reviews, field inspections, and Operations and Maintenance Plan review and filing. Also, you may not be aware of this, but Chatham County has officially partnered with the Town of Pittsboro to implement the requirements for State 1 of the Jordan Lake Rules.

Who will take on the task of stormwater administration for the county and Pittsboro with the proposed budget and reorganization? Who has the time and expertise? Please remember that water quality and quantity are keys to our economic future.

2. **Watershed Protection.** Stream certification and wetland delineation certification and experience are required of developers according to our Watershed Protection Ordinance; these certifications are also required of staff that administers the Watershed Protection Ordinance. Currently only the ER Director and Lead Sedimentation and Erosion Control officer on staff in the county have this certification from DWQ; some members of the ERB, including myself, also have this DWQ certification. The current ER Director has eight years experience with stream certifications, and my understanding is that the current Director of Waste Management is not currently DWQ-certified, nor has any experience with stream certification. Keep in mind that this task of stream and wetland determination is not just an ordinance requirement; it’s critical to the protection of our water resources (including Jordan Lake, a regional water supply and recreational destination).

Who will take the lead in ensuring that watershed protection is adequately considered in the county? Who has the time and expertise?

Without adequate watershed protection, the goal of protecting our important natural resources is destined to fail.

3. **Floodplain Management.** The current ER Director is the only Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) on staff. A CFM is not required, but if there is ever a challenge, a CFM will provide the only credentials a judge would appreciate for decisions involving regulated floodplains. Any PE on staff willing to do this work is otherwise acceptable, but having a CFM is a great benefit. Based on the proposed elimination of the ER Director, the county now will have no Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) representation or a strong background in floodplain issues, which could put the county at greater risk of making errors with the National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP).

In addition, and just as important, the current ER Director has been instrumental in writing grant applications for the county that has brought in money for watershed protection and new parks in the county; working with stakeholders to develop the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Chatham County; educating staff and the public on important natural resources; and serving as the lead engineer for the county in park planning, design, and implementation. These aspects of the ER Director do not translate at all to what is proposed in the budget – which is essentially a water quality permitting technician, overseen by an Environmental Services Director that will be wearing too many hats to concentrate on the tasks I've just outlined. Who will fill these roles now under the proposed budget?

Further, the current ER Director also presently serves on the Jordan Lake Scientific Advisory Board; this board makes recommendations to the state on how much annual Total Phosphorus (TP) and Total Nitrogen (TN) Chatham County will be required to keep out of Jordan Lake. By removing the ER Director from this appointed position (by way of eliminating the position and not having staff to fill this role), Chatham is essentially removing its voice and its interest in this higher-level decision making regarding Jordan Lake, our primary water supply and major recreation area. You can be sure that Greensboro, Durham, NC Department of Transportation, and others will all be represented. Where will Chatham be?

In summary, I question how the current Waste Management Director can be very involved with any of these aspects of what currently falls under the purview of the ER Dept. and ER Director. Right now more than ever we need to maintain high quality customer service, institutional knowledge, coordination in-house and with other partners, and representation in regional and state natural resource decisions-making. We also need staff that has the knowledge, expertise and experience to deal with the wide range of environmental issues facing our county.

Commissioners, it's my understanding that you pledged to protect the environment during your campaigns for office. Now is not the time to be making hasty decisions, especially when so much is at stake. Is eliminating a position that provides tremendous benefit to our natural resources, our citizenry, our standing in the region and in the state, and our reputation for dependable customer service worth it? I urge you to seriously consider the consequences of the proposed budget and reorganization on meeting the goal of protecting our natural resources, and to keep the ER Department intact for the benefit of our natural resources, our citizens, and future generations.”

Jim Duncan, 662 Royal Sunset Drive, Durham, NC, stated that he was representing the Coalition for American Principles in Durham, Wake, Orange, and Chatham Counties. In Chatham County, there are over 150 members. During the last election, they campaigned diligently for the three new Commissioners. They put in over seven hundred volunteer hours. They asked them to bring strong fiscal responsibility to government, to cut down on over-reaching government, to reduce duplication of costs, to look at the programs and services that are offered in our county and measure them to make sure they are working. Those that are working, give more money. They also asked them to put education in the forefront. He stated that the Board is doing its job and they will continue to support them as long as they stay on this path. He expressed his thanks to the County Manager and his staff for doing an outstanding job on the budget.

Randolph Voller, 21 Randolph Circle, Pittsboro, NC, presented his comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Like many citizens I have had the opportunity to review the proposed budget.

On page three (3), staff reports that “Chatham County begins the long recovery from the Great Recession in good financial shape.” And kudos to the staff and previous boards for making the tough decisions to place our county in a place to start this fiscal budget on solid footing.

For this new board this will be your first budget, and as I mentioned last meeting, the course, tone and quality of life for all of our citizens, residents and business owners will derive from your first budget.

I hope to see more direct investment and partnerships with our municipalities in the final budget. I was disappointed to see cuts to the recreation funds that the County had been sending to Siler City and Pittsboro in the past. These may not seem like much, but the municipalities have made great use of those funds, which have also benefited the community at-large.

I also noted on page three (3) that the focus on core services apparently provides less flexibility in the budget, since more funds (75% as opposed to 71%) are now mandated. This policy has been augmented by a directive to the County Manager to “eliminate unnecessary programs”, too.

I realize you are eager to satisfy various constituencies, but I respectfully urge that you do not throw the proverbial “baby out with the bath water.”

Furthermore, I am unsure of how you define the “core services” and necessary programs your budget references, but my grandfather used to say that “one man’s garbage is another man’s treasure”, so I hope we are being prudent as opposed to being a “penny wise and pound foolish” with our decisions.

I also noted on page three (3) a reference to future operating costs for a jail. I hope we can spend a bit more time evaluating all of the options regarding detention centers that likely will cost in excess of fifteen (15) million dollars. Furthermore, I do not believe that the Town of Pittsboro’s Planning Board has either reviewed such a plan and/or approved such a plan, so it seems to me that the Town and County should discuss this item at one of Pittsboro’s Town Board meetings.

Finally, I noted a lot of language regarding streamlining and making processes easier for citizens and businesses. If that is the mandate I would request that our Board of Commissioners do the same regarding citizen participation in their democracy and advocate to make voting more available, easier and hassle free. The proposed, not actual, savings for next year is less than \$6,850 or approximately 0.008% of your projected amended revenues for 2011.

Since citizen participation is a building block of democracy and a healthy civil society, I would hope we could stand for hassle free elections and open access to voting.

Finally, I have researched the fraud rates in Chatham County and the State of North Carolina. According to the State Board of Elections and the Chatham County Board of Elections the rate of alleged fraud has been consistent since 2000---approximately 0.003%. So with elections that are 99.997% clean I must ask again that we stand for open elections with as much access as possible for our citizens.

If we are going to streamline anything let it be democracy for it will flourish with less roadblocks not more.

Thank you.”

Tara Alden, 77 Lilly McCoy Lane, expressed gratitude for the essential services provided by our air and water. She stated that rarely does she receive a bill directly from air and water, but she works every day to make sure they are there and clean and ready to go.

Ms. Alden presented comments written by Sonny Keisler, 3006 River Forks Road, Sanford, NC, which she stated that she supports. They are provided in their entirety for the record as follows:

“I urge the Commissioners to reject budget proposals that dismantle environmental protections. I especially encourage the Commissioners to ...

- A. reinstate the Sustainable Community Development Director position,
- B. maintain the Environmental Resources Director position,
- C. fill the vacant soil erosion control position,
- D. fund development of a land use planning map,
- E. keep a separate environmental protection department, and
- F. support an effective Environmental Review Board,

These steps are essential if Chatham is to continue being one of the three most prosperous counties in North Carolina. As a retired real estate developer I am certain a lot of Chatham residents came here because Chatham offered a clean, beautiful natural environment. For this reason it is smart business to do all we can to maintain a clean, beautiful environment that will attract prosperous new residents. The proposed budget will not do this.

It is time for the Commissioners to reject the silly ideological notion promoted by the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh that the best way to protect the natural environment is get government out of the way and simply empower those who control private wealth. The top 5% of households in the United States own 69% of the financial wealth. This means if we used the John Locke Foundation approach we would let the top 5% of households determine what happens to our environment. This can be called **“TRICKLE DOWN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION”**. We know from over 30 years of trying “TRICKLE DOWN” economics this approach does not work.

In the final analysis, the wise use of both public and private resources is essential if we are to regain prosperity for the many rather than the few and ... stave off costly environmental problems that will harm us all. This includes especially catastrophic climate change – which the National Academy of Sciences just this past week warned is headed our way ... like a runaway locomotive.

Mr. Bock, Mr. Petty and Ms. Stewart stop drinking the cheap 21st century ideological wine given you by the John Locke Foundation and get off the railroad tracks before you harm us all. In short, because Chatham does not have a financial crisis it is important that you follow the much better 17th century advice of John Locke himself. He would say ... use the best scientific information available. If you do this, I am confident you will budget enough money to ensure a clean, healthy, beautiful Chatham County for us all.

Thank you.”

Cathy Wright, 51315 Eastchurch Road, Chapel Hill, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“I commend the Commissioners and their staff for proposing a budget that will prepare the county for obligations - those must be paid now and in the near future. We have additional debt service and operating costs over the next few years which are largely associated with the new middle school, the new library, and other large projects. Additionally the state is looking to require that counties begin housing more individuals in our jails and this will significantly increase the operating costs of our jails. It is expected that we will need to build a new high school and a new elementary school soon. Property values will be reassessed in a couple of years, and these values will drop from the artificial levels that are now established leading to reduced revenue for the county. In addition, we do not yet know the full extent of budget cuts from the State that will further stress our budget.

Planning for these expenses now is wise and prudent. It seems to me that the best way to do that is by reducing spending, not increasing taxes. Over the past year I've spoken with citizens throughout the county and many, especially Seniors have expressed that an increase in property tax would be a hardship. I presume that without the reductions proposed in the current budget you would need to increase our property tax rate this year and probably next as well.

As I understand, you are proposing a reduction of just \$1.5 million out of nearly \$84 million budget. That is just under 2% of our total. The proposed budget **does not** reduce spending for education. Rather it actually increases spending for K-12 and our community college by \$1.4 million.

It appears that you are trying to reduce spending as much as possible consistent with good government practices and objectives. I commend you for honoring the pledges and promises made during the election. All of the commissioners should honor the voters who sent a message in the biggest poll of late – in last year's election – the voters said enough, reduce spending, don't raise taxes, and be more careful with our money. Thank you."

Brad Johnson, 300 Hillsboro Street, Pittsboro, NC, stated that there are one hundred counties in this state ranked in order of population, Chatham County is about in the middle. However, we are in the top quarter when it comes to taxes. Under prior leadership, spending and taxes grew faster than the population. It is not exactly sustainable. This is not a time to increase spending and it is not a time to increase taxes. We are still not really out of the severe recession. Unemployment is still at record levels. We have very steep inflation in food, gas, and other basic commodities. Additional tax increases to support increased spending would hurt those on fixed incomes the most. The proposed budget insures that we do not have to increase taxes this year and he thanks the Board for it. The Board focused on the core functions of government, not the "nice-to-haves" and not the "pointless-to-haves" just the "need-to-haves". That is also very much appreciated. Some truly believe that excess spending is only a starting place. He stated that he can assure the Board that those who voted for them in the last election do not believe that. He thanked the Board for all of their hard work and asked them to please continue.

John Graybeal, 3396 Alston Chapel Road, Pittsboro, NC, presented his comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

"The overview seems to be that the proposed budget of \$82.8 million would involve a cut of \$1.5 million and would either have a severely damaging effect on many important programs or would terminate them altogether. All of this is the result of mandates from the newly-elected Commissioners that County departments cut their expense levels by 4-5% despite the fact that the County's financial condition is excellent and there is no need for these damaging reductions.

These cuts are being defended with the use of a mantra to the effect that, while they are substantial, they assure "the continuation of core functions of county government." Chairman Bock introduced the concept of "core functions" last year. The notion apparently derives from right-wing sources such as the John Locke Foundation, has no respectable content and serves only as a label to justify budget cuts for programs that are critically necessary for many citizens and which citizens generally support.

The proper test for a governmental program is not whether it serves some nebulous and ill-defined "core function" but whether it is an appropriate government activity that provides needed services to citizens and is supported by the community. Despite the fact that many of the programs that this budget would cut easily meet this standard, the new majority wants to axe them nevertheless.

A widely-used economics textbook written by Gregory Mankiw (not noted as a liberal) points out that government intervention is frequently necessary to correct market imperfections. The Mankiw textbook particularly supports government programs that promote (1) efficiency or (2) equity. Mankiw points out that government programs that attack pollution and protect the environment promote efficiency because they prevent firms from imposing environmental costs on innocent bystanders, i.e., the rest of the community.

The wholesale assault on environmental protection contained in Chatham County's proposed budget is an indefensible rejection of a proper government program. Chatham's budget also lays waste to many programs that promote equity, including the already cut position of the Human Relations Director and the cuts in social programs, e.g., the \$84,000 cut in adult day care administration.

The proposed budget should be rejected.”

Laura Lauffer, 350 Moon Meadow Lane, Pittsboro, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“In 1996 I was the director of Carolina Farm Stewardship Association a member based non-profit serving farmers and consumers in North and South Carolina. At the time I assumed the directorship CFSA was located in Carrboro, I soon came to realize that Chatham County was home to so many like minded organizations, Rural Advancement Foundation, American Livestock Breeds Association, Haw River Assembly, NC Rural Communities Assistance Project and the new small farms program at Central Carolina Community College. Chatham County was home to a group of citizens committed to the growth of small farms and environmental stewardship. I decided to move CFSA to Pittsboro where it still exists today in an expanded office space of the Blair Hotel Building on the circle.

Soon after that move, my husband and I purchased a home and started our family here. Five years ago my mother moved to Pittsboro. We have put down roots here. Why? Because the citizens and leadership of this county valued community, environment, schools and local agriculture.

In the past twelve years in Chatham I have been a foster parent, active PTA member, donor to local organizations, I have helped to fund local businesses and now work full time at the community college- I am strongly committed to my community. Currently I serve on the Green Building and Renewable Energy Advisory Board. That board recommended the creation of the renewable energy rebate program, you say this program is underutilized; I am not sure how that decision was made since construction is down, this is the first year of implementation and as construction picks up these applications will tick up as well. Our county should be part of the new energy economy and support renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Chatham County was a destination for the past two weekends to view numerous green homes built in the county, sponsored by the Green Home Builders of the Triangle. My family purchased more land and built our new home in Chatham County, using local talented green builders and using locally produced products throughout the home and landscape. There are numerous businesses in Chatham County that support green building, energy efficiency and green manufacturing practices, Uniboard, Moncure Plywood, Briar Chapel, Verrazo tiles, Wrenn Brothers and now we are host to SIX farmers markets. Scores of students come to Chatham County to study culinary arts, farming, building and renewable energy. Those students pay rent, work part time jobs and spend money in the county. They are an asset, our leaders should embrace the programs they are here to study, and hopefully they will stay here, create businesses, find jobs, purchase and build homes and expand their families as I did. If we do not support these programs and continue to degrade environmental protections and remove incentives for sustainable growth, you are sending a negative message to these young entrepreneurs and stewards.

I tell you this to illustrate the need for continued support of the programs that bring people like me to Chatham County. Support for our environment, our schools, our students and parks. Please know that there are many more people interested in simpler way of life that we live in Chatham County, but if we continue to degrade our schools, environment, parks and libraries we will lose the charm and draw of people like me who move organizations TO Chatham County, build homes, invest in local businesses and promote our county as a gem of North Carolina.”

Maja Kricker, 224 Buteo Ridge, Pittsboro, NC, Chair, Chatham County Board of Elections, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“I am Chair of the Chatham County Board of Elections. I do not speak for other members or the staff of the Board of Elections. I do speak as a public official who is responsible for the policies that determine the fairness of our elections. Currently our Board of Elections has a bare-bones budget. We do not spend any money that is not critical to our operations. This year members and staff gave up training opportunities as too costly. We lack equipment that would help to carry out administrative duties. Yet we were required to cut our budget and the only cuts left were to reduce the one-stop (early) voting period in North Chatham and Siler City for the next national primary election.

These cuts should not be made. Access to voting is not a partisan issue, it is a basic premise of our democracy that our citizens choose their leadership through the electoral process. It is our duty as public officials to provide the means for all of our people to vote for those who determine the direction of our communities and our country. One-stop voting gives our citizens the opportunity to register and vote on the same day at any one-stop polling place, regardless of precinct. The Board of Elections has the opportunity to resolve registration problems and ensure that our citizens are able to exercise their franchise. Because voting is spread out over a two and a half week period, poll workers have more time to assist voters in a welcoming atmosphere. Two thirds of the people voting in the 2008 national election took advantage of one-stop voting. Over 4000 voters voted the first week of one-stop voting, yet that week will be cut in this budget. Will we really save money? We will require more poll workers and equipment to avoid long lines, spend more time validating provisional ballots and if we continue this in the future, would require additional precincts or more early voting sites. The savings **may** amount to a few thousand dollars in a budget of about 85 million dollars for 2011/2012. I refer you to an article that explains the problems involved in reducing the early voting period. In this instance it discusses a bill that is has gone to the NC State Senate. <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2011/05/19/2307261/shorter-early-votingcostlier.html>

Is the cost worth reducing access to the polls? Our county is growing and we will need more access, not less. Early, one-stop voting does not favor a particular party, as we saw in the 2010 election. Who does one-stop voting favor? It favors mothers with young children who cannot wait in long lines to vote. It favors people who work long hours. It favors the people in rural areas who must travel long distances to get to their precincts. It favors the new voter who has just come to Chatham County or has just turned eighteen or is a proud new citizen of our country. It favors the elderly who must arrange rides to get to the polls. It favors fairness in elections.

I am asking, as an elections official, that you not reduce the early voting period. Access to the polls is not a privilege; it is a basic principle of this country and who we are as a people. We cannot give that up at any price.”

Nancy Balasubramanian, 2018 Moncure-Pittsboro Road, Moncure, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“My name is Nancy Balasubramanian and I have lived in Chatham County for the past seven years at 2018 Moncure-Pittsboro Road. Before that, I lived in San Diego, CA, and before that in Silver Spring, MD. I mention these addresses only to let you know that I have lived before in places where growth was not managed well, and the residents and environment suffered. I moved to Chatham by accident really. I thought I would probably live in Durham as it was closer to my first job in NC. But I came to Chatham and fell in love with it. I have perceived this county as a place that values its environment, its rural character and heritage, and has a progressive attitude toward the future.

I appreciate the County Manager’s overview of the budget, and I understand that we do indeed live in a climate of economic uncertainty. We don’t know what the state legislature will do, nor how quickly the national economy will recover. That said, ***we – you, as our commissioners and elected representatives – need to act out of certainty about who we are, what we value, and what we need and want for our citizens.*** Although we must be responsible in our actions, we cannot – or should not – act out of fear. The budget that you approve must reflect the things that we in Chatham value, and our desire to support and nurture those things. Cutting costs cannot be an end in itself. Our resources need to be employed in the service of the programs that serve us: environmental resources, education,

park facilities, and libraries, among others. To be realistic about future commitments cannot mean that we forsake those we have already made.

Chatham County is growing quickly and must grow wisely. We need a sensible program for growth and land-use – one that serves all of the county’s residents and not just the developers. We must preserve that which makes this such a special place. No one comes to Chatham because they want it to be like Cary.

I teach at a small school in Chapel Hill, and two weeks ago brought a class of 9th graders down to Pittsboro to CCCC. We spent the morning working on the student farm with Robin Kohanovich and Hillary Heckler, and the afternoon with Bob Armentrout and John Delafield hearing about biofuels, sustainable energy programs, and the importance of present-day decisions on the future – their future. It’s not an easy thing to keep the attention of a dozen 9th graders, but they were a rapt audience. We went camping that night at Jordan Lake and they were still talking about what they had seen, heard, and done. They went home the next day thinking that Chatham was a great place.

I hope that the decisions of the commissioners around this budget can sustain that vision – for those students and for all those in Chatham County. Thank you.”

Kathleen Hundley, 136 Rocky Falls, Sanford, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

”My name is Kathleen Hundley, I live at 136 Rocky Falls, and I have been a land owner in Chatham County for over 25 years.

A seamstress must be careful when cutting a pattern or she may lay the pattern on the fabric incorrectly and cut too soon so there is not enough fabric and the desired garment is ruined. In trimming an orchard, if the farmer cuts too many limbs such that the trees can’t get adequate nutrients, the orchard may die.

In Chatham County, the items on the budget show cuts that appear to this seamstress to end up ruining the fabric of our county, particularly in the area of the environment. It is vital that we keep strongly in mind that we live in one of, if not the, loveliest counties in central North Carolina, - a lush, green area that is welcoming to both new residences and business at the very first sight. As the seamstress must do when laying out the pattern, we must plan carefully with land development so as not to spoil the very features that new enterprises may have come to Chatham to find.

Chatham County has a 27% excess budget when the State requires only 8%, or approximately \$2,000,000 dollars in the bank unobligated, so why are we cutting so many programs? Might it be because your immediate predecessors saw the need to protect Chatham and set in motion ways to do that? They addressed the need with fiscal foresight, especially through, although not limited to, the Environmental Review Board, the Environmental Resource Office and Director, stable funding for a growing educational system, the Planning Board to monitor where in the county development can best be located and constructed, and to address the needs of the large Hispanic community in Chatham and encourage them to become U.S. citizens. The reasons for the establishment of each of these offices is just as important in managing Chatham County today as it was during the last four years, perhaps even more so. Surely you are aware that doubling up responsibilities on fewer groups is not cost-effective, but adds stress to the worker, delays in providing results, spending ultimately more in employee salaries and benefits and assures a “lose-lose” for everyone.

It is the wise seamstress who carefully plans her piece of fabric before cutting, and it’s wise leadership that carefully plans the more needed and effective ways to monitor and protect the fabric of Chatham County. Before adopting this budget, in consideration of the percentage of monies we have as a cushion and the value of the programs you have sliced away from the budget, think again and reposition the pieces on the fabric –giving the citizens of Chatham County a “win-win” leadership that uses carefully thought-through foresight and does not eliminate or reduce spending for environmental protection and other social needs.”

Beth Kricker, 224 Buteo Ridge, Pittsboro, NC, stated that she was concerned with the direction that she might not understand. It seems that the biggest item on the budget is a jail. This is not consistent with the culture and spirit of Chatham County as she knows it. She also doesn't know who is going to be put in this jail. It seems to her that instead of building a jail, why can't we let all the people who aren't violent out of the jail and spend the money doing the counseling, the monitoring, and sending them back to school. We would have a community that looks forward. The other thing that concerns her is who is going to round up all the people that have to go into the jail. What is going to happen to our very fine police force that are basically there with the mandate to protect the people and to safeguard our children. If you are going to have to fill a jail that costs millions and millions of dollars, they are going to be very busy. She feels that our community will be left unprotected. The other thing that bothers her is that she understands that financing schools is an expensive proposition. But a 2% increase for schools that rank 45 down in the nation, is just not enough. Our children need to be prepared. Nothing has been said about preschool and other kindergartens that are the road to college in the final analysis. She stated that she thinks if she had anything to say, she would rethink how we are spending the money. We need teachers with a standard of living that leaves them free of worry and able to concentrate on actually educating our children.

Jeffrey Starkweather, 590 Old Goldston Road, Pittsboro, NC, presented his comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Chatham County is an incredibly wonderful place to live and raise a family. I've had the fortune of living here for 39 years and raising two children who attended our public schools. I now am even more fortunate to have two granddaughters who will attend Chatham schools, one who starts in kindergarten at North Chatham Elementary this fall.

But Chatham is not a particularly good place to find a high paying job. In fact, the last decade we have lost thousands of jobs as our legacy industries declined. We need to turn this around. As a member of the Chatham County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) for the last four years, I know we have the people and place assets needed make Chatham not only a perfect place to live, but a prosperous place to work and/or operate a business.

What role should county government play in attracting jobs and business? How does that role relate to the annual budget?

The county's role is to make economic development investments in schools, recreation, water, sewer, broadband, arts and culture, and libraries, and by assisting our towns in revitalizing our Main Streets as vibrant attractions, and protecting and enhancing our rural character and natural resources.

This type of amenity- or place-based strategy - the high road to prosperity - is the name of the competitive economic development attraction game today, not the old low-road of low wages, low taxes, limited services and lax environmental and land use regulations. I read this budget as taking the wrong road, that low-road to further loss of jobs and higher property taxes as our tax base continues to rely more and more on residential property.

This budget also appears to have taken the disproven economic austerity road, which asserts that cutting local government services and reducing these critical economic development investments will somehow magically free up the private market to produce bountiful jobs and prosperity.

This budget is additionally based upon the false premise that Chatham County is facing a budget crisis. We are not. We have an enormous fund balance, excellent bond rating, increased contingency funding and this budget has under-estimated general fund revenues by 2%. Moreover, the current board majority already rejected their own crisis rhetoric when it spent \$615,000 in bonuses for county employees.

As a result, this budget contributes to the county's real crisis – continued job losses and failure to attract new high paying jobs.

Cuts related to environmental protection, green building, the bookmobile and library hours, recreation support for the towns, social services for at-risk children, families and seniors, human resources and early voting are unnecessary and will hurt our economy in both the short and long run. To give just one example, an economic multiplier effect analysis done for the EDC determined that for every local job lost, the local economy will lose another 8.3 jobs. For every dollar in salary lost, there is an equivalent of another \$0.62 cents in lost payrolls. In addition to school personnel cuts, which I will address in a moment, we are eliminating 10 county positions. You can do the math.

The most important economic development investment that a county government can make to attract quality jobs is improving our public schools. Here the board majority's approach is incredibly short-sighted. Despite making this their highest budget criteria, they have stated they are not willing to pay the additional \$730,000 needed to keep up with projected enrollment increases. You can count the tail to claim a dog has five legs, but it is still a dog with four real legs, just like giving the school the same dollars amount is still a real budget cut.

For the last three years we have been experiencing a reverse multiplier effect on local jobs as our public schools have been forced to eliminate approximately 30 jobs. This year's real short term budget crisis – our county school funding – will result in another loss of 29.33 full-time equivalent jobs and a little over \$2 million in annual payroll. The local negative multiplier effect from just this year's proposed school personnel cuts will be the loss of an additional 23.34 jobs and approximately \$1.25 million in payroll in our local economy. All these jobs cuts amount to a “disinvestment” strategy.

Thus, this budget is a job killer, not a job creator.

I ask you join the rest of the Triangle region on the high road to economic development and restore these budget investments our county needs to enable all our people and places to prosper.”

Angela Glover, 396 Rolling Meadows Lane, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that when she saw the presentation she was relieved. She thanked the Board for not cutting spending on education and environmental services and for using the common sense and the fiscal conservatism that she voted the Board in for. She stated that they worked long and hard in November and the budget is perfect. She would not change a thing. She is glad we are not wasting money today so we can save money for the future. You never know what is going to happen. She stated that she appreciates the Board member's honesty, courage, and she thanks them very much.

Brian Glover, 396 Rolling Meadows Lane, Chapel Hill, NC, stated he relocated his family to Chatham County over three years ago because he loved the people here. There will be different views and opinions here. Making cuts or changes is not easy. Everyone would like to be able to take more vacations and spend more money but they have to be realistic. He appreciates what the Commissioners have proposed. He knows that it will not make everyone happy but he thinks that preparing for the future and knowing that we can be financially sound in case the economy takes a lot longer to come around is being smart. A good negotiation is where both sides have to give up a little bit. He thinks that is what happens here. He thanked the Board for their time.

Gary Simpson, 82 Cynthia Lane, Pittsboro, NC, presented his comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Is Chatham's glass half empty... or half full?”

The recommended budget reflects a prevalent mood of austerity that views life in Chatham as a glass half empty. This perception drives the mandate to radically cut back (streamline) expenditures that are not critical to “core government” functions as defined by some members of the BOC. This perception asserts that the county is basically broken (ill), and the recommended budget is the fix (pill).

But before November of 2010 Chatham was looking pretty good... a glass half full. By all indicators, it was making the grade and getting high marks. It wasn't broken, and the

budget was not in crisis mode. On the contrary, it was doing better than most even in the midst of recession and was well positioned to enter a new fiscal year.

Then suddenly the bottom drops out of the half full glass. Like Humpty Dumpty, Chatham has taken a great fall according to some of the BOC. They scramble to quickly salvage the remnants of what they perceive to have been a “bad egg” all along. The “rescue squad” determines that only radical surgery can save the broken county. The scalpels are passed out, and everyone is assigned their due portion to extract. The game plan for the slicing and dicing is dutifully carried out, and we are left with what can be seen on the operating table by folks of my ilk as a “penny wise” and “pound (of flesh) foolish” budget.

The public hearing on this recommended budget gives citizens such as me the opportunity to suggest that the county seek a second opinion before going under the knife. That opinion, which I share along with others who are still able to see a glass half full, is that the county is not lying scrambled in a mess after all. In fact, Chatham is still sitting rather pretty in spite of all the hand wringing and dire prognoses to the contrary. Truth is, Chatham is not broke. If it's not broke, then we don't need to fix it. That means the recommended budget is unnecessary surgery. Therefore, the discomfort, pain and risk that the recommended budget inflicts upon the services and people of Chatham can be seen as unwarranted, unwise and unnecessary.

I understand a public budget to be more than a cost cutting manifesto. A county budget is at its heart a moral document and a creedal statement of what a community values and believes. A budget that is used as a “key to the county” to open the door to more “business as usual” while sacrificing regulations and regulators that were created to protect precious and finite environmental resources and enhance recreation, tourism and general quality of life is, I believe, a budget with misplaced values. A budget that worships at the altar of trickle down economics, free market fundamentalism and government deregulation is not one in which I can put any faith.

I sincerely wish you the wisdom of Solomon and the heart of Saint Francis of Assisi as you deliberate this recommended budget.”

Sue Clark, 29 Caswell, Pittsboro, NC, stated that the presentation was very clear. There is a great concern about the unknown about what is further received from the State. It is never easy to cut budgets. However, she feels that the County has done an outstanding job of recommending and receiving an overall cooperative budget with which to move forward. Many will want their ideas to overrule what County officials have so diligently worked on and presented with Chatham County's best interests in mind. We need to stop the small bickering in light of the required obedience that has been involved by the officials for the times that we are in. She stated that she had only seen one department work, but it is a hand-wringing situation in knowing what, who, and how to cut. She stated that she appreciates all of the work and all of the hours entailed. She stated that it saddens all of them in having the bookmobile cuts. On behalf of the Friends of the Library, she stated that are looking to instigate a book-mate program which will have people that are capable transferring books to people who are not capable or able to getting them. With 760 members, they can find people to help with that.

Kathryn Butler, 404 Wooded Lake Drive, Apex, NC, stated that she also represents over a hundred acre farm at 8794 NC Highway 751. She stated that she also represents over 600 acres of forest land in Chatham County. She stated that none of her lands are in the process of consideration for development now or any time in the immediate future. In that background, she stated that she would like to speak in response to criticism and in favor of the proposed budget and fiscal conservatism. Her personal experience over the past few years in working with the County is that the staffing has increased but the services have decreased. She made that comment within a County office and they humorously agreed with her. More people does not necessarily mean better government or better service. The need to be fiscally conservative does not need to be motivated by any crisis nor does the County need to spend itself into a crisis in order to cut back. If she looks at this from a personal, financial perspective, does she need to spend herself into debt in order to begin to conserve. Money in the bank allows for better planning and for addressing real needs, some of those identified for many people such as education and the need for future schools. This budget discussion has become a place for piling on of every current issue from environmentalism to

education. Referencing the County jail and the expansion of the jail as an example of bad planning by the Board of Commissioners is inaccurate because these items were approved under the previous administration and not this one. No one expects them to want more jails and we all need better education. If there are specific concerns for expenditures beyond the proposed budget, let each item stand on its own merit and be vetted for the wishes of the taxpayers. She closed by quoting, "Giving money and power to government, is like giving keys and whiskey to teenage boys." Let's exercise our parental obligation and choose good government.

Saliann Mao, 838 Fearington Post, Pittsboro, NC, stated that as a naturalized citizen, she is extremely proud to be an American and considers voting a privilege, not a right. She stated that last year she had chance to watch the polls. For many days, she was there for four hours and there were only a few people coming. Where she came from in California, she never experienced early voting. Representative Joe Hackney stated in 2009, that there was no pork in the budget. In the midst of a recession and one of the largest budget deficits in the State history, lawmakers adopted 1.1 billion in new taxes in order to balance the budget. Today, the Chatham County Democratic Party made a statement by saying there is no fiscal crisis, yet schools, recreation, libraries, environmental, and health services face a County budget axe. She asked, "Do we or don't we have a budget crisis?" We all know that higher taxes inevitably lead to lost jobs and businesses and a closer look at the fiscal budget reveals \$300 million waste of taxpayer's money. That is why we elected the new Commissioners because 66% of the people rejected the local tax increases. She stated that she thinks we should throw out the political gain and be supportive of our Commissioners.

Ted Dunn, 863 Hatfield, Fearington Post, Pittsboro, NC, stated that his politics are progressive so he does not like the budget. The Environmental Resources Director position is important in light of new natural gas reserves. They are talking about changing the State law to allow fracking which he is totally against. He stated that he is a user of the bookmobile and he thinks it is a shame that it has not been funded for the next budget. He stated that he thinks the schools are a big part of what this County has to fund to progress. He thinks that holding the current budget is not sufficient, it should be expanded. He is glad to hear that the community college had an 8% increase.

Ben Feole, 102 Green Meadow Court, Pittsboro, NC, speaking on behalf of Heather Johnson, complimented the Board on giving up their time and efforts to do the work that they have to do. Chatham County would not function if it was not for people like them. It is incumbent upon this Commission to take a look at what has transpired in the past. Learn from history. Assess the present and plan for the future. There is no question about others who have served before this Board doing the best they could. But that really means that it is incumbent upon this Commission to do even better. The economic condition we find in the country is such that we cannot assume that we are going to get the revenue from the federal people that we have gotten in the past. He thinks it behooves us to understand that we have a vital asset in our County. He has been here seven years. He came here because it is a Mecca. It is beautiful and there are not many places like it in the United States. He stated that he was not talking about just the land and the lizards, he is talking about everything including, and most importantly, the people. He thinks we should try to keep the environment the way we want it, but also keep it in perspective. Humans still have to live here, work here, and raise their families here. One thing we need to be looking at is how to take and plan for this community to become even better. It is nice to see pretty trees, but he sees a lot of people on Highway 15-501 going north in the morning. That means that they don't work here. They spend money on gas to go north. What we are doing, he feels, is right. Cut the budget, be prudent with our money, and tax if you have to, but not until you have checked everything else. He closed by saying that Heather Johnson and he say, "Thank you very much."

Ben Pistol, 102 Green Meadow Court, Pittsboro, NC, stated that he wanted to thank the Board of Commissioners for putting the checkbook online and also that they are blogging about the issues and letting them know why they voted the way they did. He stated that they hear a lot of "sustainable communities, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable energy". He also asked that while we discuss what is sustainable, that they also understand that their spending and budget must be sustainable. Cutting programs may not be popular with a few constituents and it certainly isn't easy. He asked the Board to keep in mind that budget

shortfalls not corrected by reduced spending must be corrected by tax increases. He asked the Board to vote to approve the proposed budget.

Candace Steele, 145 Julia Lane, Pittsboro, NC, began by thanking the Board for taking such a careful look at the budget. She stated that she was baffled when she hears that we are not in trouble so we should just keep on spending. The way our country got where it is today is because we kept spending and spending. She appreciates everyone being responsible and having the courage to look at the budget and make these unpopular decisions. It is hard when everyone has their hands out. You have all kinds of nonprofits and different government agencies, all wanting more, more, more. She stated that she appreciates the Board realizing that she, too, as a citizen has her hand out. Her hand is not out to give her more, but to say stop. Stop all the excess spending. Be responsible with her money. She appreciates the Board understanding that she can be a good steward with her money, that she can provide for her children, and that she can be responsible with the environment around her. Although she is not an environmentalist, she loves what we have in Chatham County. She doesn't want to see it ruined, but there has to be a balance. They have to accept personal responsibility for the environment for our water quality and water usage. She stated that she appreciates the Board searching to find a balance in this and she admires what they are doing.

Michael Strong, 618 Rosswood Road, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that when he was small, he lived in Bermuda where there is no ground water. They were never allowed to take baths or showers at his house. His mother would make his siblings and him sneak into the hotels to take showers in empty rooms when the maids were cleaning the rooms. He knows about water scarcity. He has been fortunate enough to live with a ground water well on his property and rely on that water for all their needs. It does disturb him somewhat that they are cutting back on environmental protection. He stated that it seems they need people to protect the ground water in doing the environmental resource protection. It would be nice to trust the guys to do something right, but that is not going to happen. He encouraged the Board to think twice before cutting that position.

Buddy Denise, 2196 Bonlee-Bennett Road, Siler City, NC, stated that there is talk about how well off we are in the County. He stated that he received an email from someone in the County this week who stated that we were the third wealthiest median income in the State. If you go to Harpers Crossroads, Bonlee, or Moncure and go in to some of the country stores, those people might be surprised at wealthy we are. Times are tough. To say otherwise, then you haven't been over on that side of the County. He welcomed the Board to come over to that side of the County. He thinks that the people in the western part of the County do a good job of taking care of it. He commended the Commissioners in not raising the property taxes and streamlining the government. He thanked the Board for doing a sometimes thankless job and the County staff for all they do.

Kathy Hodges, 101 Stonethrow, Chapel Hill, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Good evening. My name is Kathy Hodges and I live at 101 Stonestrow in North Chatham. I am the Co-Executive Director of Family Violence and Rape Crisis Services.

I have come here tonight to speak in support of funding for Family Violence and Rape Crisis Services. Funding from the County is critical, supporting our development coordinator and our 24-hour crisis line.

While the development coordinator funding is not for direct services, our ability to provide direct services is directly related to raising the +/- \$1M each year required for services for more than 800 victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, such as shelter, counseling, and support groups, and for prevention projects to reduce violence in our community. Chatham County also money matches state funds, leveraging more than \$150,000 each year to support our services.

Our development office has written collaborative grants to fund two positions in the Sheriff's Office over each of the past several years, as well as officers in the two police departments, and provided assistance in seeking funding for Family Visitation Services. We

have helped generate resources to develop our county's strong response to domestic and sexual violence and Chatham County funding has helped us do that.

Most of our other funders will not provide funding for our development and PR coordinator. Chatham County's funding has been essential for stability in this position—and our agency. This is a big part of why we have been recognized across the state and nation as an outstanding domestic violence program winning the following awards:

- 2005 Mary Byron Award (National award)
- 2006 NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence Excellence Award (given to 1 program in the state every 2 years)
- 2009 Glaxo Smith Kline Impact Award (Triangle regional award)

In closing, it was the county was who originally suggested that we use our request for funding from you in this way, more than 15 years ago. They saw it as an investment then. We still see it as an investment, one that leverages additional community resources, both for our agency and the county. You have been getting an excellent return on your investment with us.

Our 24 hour crisis line is also an important service, providing a first line of contact for victims in need. Your support helps insure that a volunteer advocate is always available to talk to a domestic or sexual violence victim in crisis, accompany a rape victim to the emergency room, advise a distraught family member about services and strategies for helping a loved one or responding to questions and issues from law enforcement. Your support will help these services continue.

Thank you for your continued support.”

David Fass, 101 Markham Plantation, Apex, NC, commended the Board for the hard work and effort they put into creating a budget. He commended the past Board for putting the County in the position that they are now in. Fiscal responsibility is important. Sometimes we take a short term view point as opposed to a long term view point. He stated that he is very concerned about the Environmental Resources Director position being phased out. It seems like three positions have been involved into the new person that is still there. With New Orleans being in such a terrible position, if environmental issues are taken into account, where they used to live houses were built in an area during a drought period. Flooding caused major expenditures and heartache to that area later on. There is a down side of cutting back. He believes that we need to have someone in that position who has the knowledge, training, education, and the non-partisan output as opposed to just the fiscal output. The air, land, water, quality of life is what makes this sustainable. Other issues that he is concerned about are education which is what makes a community and the frozen food program for seniors. What happens if senior don't get at least one good meal a day? As a person who is on the road and travels a lot, don't cut out the early voting.

Miriam Pollard, 1817 Gade Bryant Road, Moncure, NC, stated that she is concerned about the environment as she lives on the Rocky River. She is concerned about fracking and all the things that are coming up in terms of her own personal property use. Seeing that time when we previously allowed so many builders to have building permits, we have enough housing here and need to examine what we have and make smart growth initiatives. In order to do that, we will need an environmental person to make sure that we have buffer zones and appropriate walkways, etc. to make it a more livable and viable community for industry to want to come, work, live and play here.

John M. Alderman, 244 Red Gate Road, Pittsboro, NC, provided his comments for the written record as follows:

“For nearly 30 years, I have worked as a biologist to help conserve North Carolina's natural resources, particularly our state's creeks and rivers. These waters have become the drinking water supplies for the majority of state citizens. Therefore, for our health and economic survival, it's critical that we better conserve these waters.

It is impossible for the private sector to know what's best to protect these waters. Many developers and others in the private sector have limited ecological understanding, and

often ignore permit limits, regulations, and government agencies. It happens more often than anyone realizes. In a major way, that's why so many of our state's freshwater mussel and fish species are considered endangered or threatened by the scientific community. Sadly, their rates of decline are accelerating. This should frighten every citizen and official, given that so many of us drink this same water that our aquatic species need for survival. As long as these species can live in our waters, we can be assured of clean, healthful water. For many citizens in North Carolina and Chatham County, that assurance is no longer possible.

My advice to you is very simple: Fully support and strengthen our existing environmental programs. Instead of cutting staff or reducing their responsibilities, increase staff positions to support our environmental programs. Do nothing to weaken your Environmental Review Board, and wisely listen to and incorporate their advice. If you do contrary to this, people will become informed of your activities, and they will learn just how increasingly endangered Chatham's waters are becoming. If this information becomes common knowledge, the growth and prosperity you desire for the minority will never occur."

Bert Bowe, 1041 Fearington Post, Pittsboro, NC, presented his comments for the written record as follows:

1. I understand that Commissioners are considering cutting 8 days from early voting to allegedly save about \$6,850 in worker salaries. I say "allegedly" as Gary Bartlett, the state elections board executive director believes it will increase the cost of elections due to requiring more voting equipment and/or precincts, and allowing less flexibility. See <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2011/05/19/2307261/shorter-early-voting-costlier.html>

I think this is just plain foolish - why would we want to make it tougher for people to vote and possibly discourage them from doing so by having fewer days and long lines? I really resent our county using a false excuse of budget constraints to make it more difficult to exercise this sacred right.

I also want to let you know that, as a Chatham resident, I am fully prepared to pay my share - recklessly assuming the cost saving estimate is correct - to keep early voting as it is: **\$0.26 a year.** (~\$6,850 divided by ~26,500 households). I also encourage any future changes to make voting even easier.

Please keep early voting days as they are.

2. On a second budget issue, I know you are a Democrat but as a reference one of the Republican campaign promises was "protecting our environment and natural resources." I fail to see how eliminating the Environmental Resources Director position, Green Building functions and weakening the Environmental Review Board, among other proposed actions, meets that promise. The Board majority also considered public education one of the essential services, yet the Board is proposing significant cuts per pupil to the education budget - and library hours of all things!

If there was a budget emergency, maybe some of these drastic cuts would have to be considered, but is there?? I understand county reserves are at 27% of general expenditures, where the state recommends 8% and the county 20%. Our bond rating is very strong - we are in good financial shape. While tax revenues have been down, do you not expect increasing construction in The Preserve and Briar Chapel and expansions in Galloway Ridge and Carolina Meadows (close to \$150M total) plus an improving economy to increase revenues in the near future?

My final key question is this: can you honestly say that Chatham would absolutely need to raise the property tax rate if all the proposed budget cuts were not made? I'll look forward to your reply.

I ask that this note be put into the 5/23/11 public meeting minutes as I have a conflict and cannot attend personally. Thank you."

Donna Kelly, 553 Holly Glenn Road, Pittsboro, NC, presented her comments for the written record as follows:

“I’d like to thank county staff for their hard work and diligence in creating this year’s budget. They always do a good job but I realize that after several years of budget tightening it takes real diligence to continue to find ways to reduce costs. I thank you for not raising taxes at a time when so many are struggling to make ends meet.

This year’s budget shows a recognition that in difficult economic times we have to prioritize services and look hard at whether or not programs are functioning as intended. By prioritizing we were able to add additional funds to education and law enforcement while many counties are making cuts across the board. There is more balance than in recent years where certain programs were greatly expanded while others were trimmed. There is rarely only one way to meet a goal and sometimes a different approach may be just as, if not more, effective. The department reorganizations in this year’s budget reflect this.

Although some will claim otherwise, budget cuts do not necessarily mean a lessening of commitment to programs. It’s been clear from the many discussions during BOC meetings over the last six months that every program is being critiqued to see if it’s living up to expectations, what its unintended consequences might be, and if there are ways to do things better. Since much of our budget is mandated, some cuts are a reflection of changes to state programs that offer different alternatives. The budget document clearly spells out the justification for the cuts and explains how the functions will be retained in a more efficient manner or why they are no longer needed. All additions to the budget are clearly justified by existing service needs.

We were fortunate that the county entered the recession in good financial shape, with a large fund balance. We were able to take advantage of favorable market conditions to move forward on several capital improvement projects. However, reality is catching up to us and it’s time to put some things on hold until conditions improve.

This budget shows Chatham County is moving in the right direction.”

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Bock adjourned the meeting at 7:43 PM.

Brian Bock, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sandra B. Sublett, CMC, NCCCC, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners