

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET INPUT SESSION, MAY 21, 2002

The Board of Commissioners ("the Board") of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Siler City Courthouse, Superior Courtroom, 311 North Second Avenue, Siler City, North Carolina, at 7:00 PM on May 21, 2002.

Present: Vice Chair Margaret Pollard; Commissioners Bob Atwater, Rick Givens, and Carl Outz; County Manager, Charlie Horne; Assistant County Manager, Paul Spruill; and Finance Officer, Vicki McConnell

Absent: Chairman Gary Phillips

The Vice Chair welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order.

The County Manager presented the Manager's Recommended FY 2002-2003 budget.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Robert Hall, Chatham County Social Services Director, made a special presentation on the DSS budget and answered questions from the Board of Commissioners and those in attendance.

Bob Knight, 406 Chimney Rock Road, Sanford, NC, requested the Board and staff to do more to increase handicap accessibility at the Department of Social Services building.

Vice Chairman Pollard thanked Mr. Knight for his comments and explained the need for a new Social Services building in accordance with the pressure being applied from the North Carolina Department of Human Services.

The County Manager explained that the DSS capital project has been postponed in an effort to wait out the State's uncertainty about reimbursing local governments.

Mr. Knight mentioned that the employees in the building have a tight workspace, but stated that he would like to see some efforts at improving handicap accessibility before the construction of a new building.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

The County Manager asked for general comments about the budget.

Bob Knight stated that he had questions for which he would like to have written responses as well as any answers that could be provided that night. His questions were as follows:

- 1.) Q: How much money has the State taken and will they take?

- A: The County Manager answered in the current year around \$300,000 so far and projected likely losses next year at \$1.7 million.
- 2.) Q: How much did we appropriate from reserves?
- A: The Manager answered that the Recommended Budget includes a General Fund appropriation of \$3.8 million for next year and that for the current year, we will have a better idea as the year comes to a close.
- 3.) Q: Are raises included for up to 8 percent?
- A: The Manager answered in the affirmative.
- 4.) Q: How much of a tax increase does the proposed fund balance appropriation for this year equate to for next year?
The Manager answered 8.5 cents on the current rate with no changes to revenues and expenditures as currently recommended.
- 4.) Q: How much of a tax increase does the proposed fund balance appropriation for this year equate to for next year?
- A: The Manager answered 8.5 cents on the current rate with no changes to revenues and expenditures as currently recommended.
- 5.) Q: How much is in the budget for water?
- A: The Manager asked Mr. Knight to say more about his question. Commissioner Givens answered that \$500,000 has been included in the Recommended Budget to start work on water extensions.
- 6.) Q: How much is in the budget for recreation?
- A: The Manager estimated a \$270,000 operating budget.
- 7.) Q: What constitutes an individual coming to ask for money outside of the budget process?
- A: The Manager answered that the Board considers these requests under special circumstances; that at times would rather not, but sometimes feel they have to.
- 1.) Q: Is there a State law that would allow the Board to take pressure off of themselves on these issues in order to help them make the decision?
- A: The Manager answered that the Board has the authority to set this procedure in whatever way they would like, but at this point, has chosen to handle such decisions themselves.

Commissioner Givens commented that the history of the Board's budget cycles is that they take the best information they have at the time and make decisions. He mentioned that he is happy to start with a neutral budget this year and decide whether to add to it or take away from it; that this is a better process than last year where the recommended budget came out at a 75 cent tax rate and the Board did what it could to cut

back to 65 cents; that while he is speaking only for himself, everything is on the table for cuts; that for instance, three board members may decide the performance raises need to be cut and then the savings would all go back into fund balance.

Commissioner Pollard and Bob Knight had a discussion concerning Mr. Knight's belief in the pay-for-performance system as long as it is carefully administered and does not get abused.

Andy Wilke asked if a budget or finance work committee might be in order, much like the Planning Board, where the Board of Commissioners can make decisions based upon recommendations from a citizen's group.

Commissioner Atwater acknowledged a "letter to the editor" that Mr. Barry Hayes distributed to respective Board members and staff which was to appear in the next day's newspaper. He further explained that he would like to ask staff to respond to the letter to the editor concerning the underestimated tax base during revaluation and last year's budget process.

Mr. Hayes responded that such work is not necessary because he simply used the County's own numbers.

Commissioner Outz suggested that the County not spend \$15 million on parks with a lot more to be forthcoming. He also suggested the Manager check into County employees filling County vehicles with the most expensive gasoline.

Mr. Knight voiced support for a private effort underway to construct and support soccer fields. He also pointed out that coaches in these recreation programs are babysitters in the long run and stated that parents drop kids off, leave, and come back to pick children up. He pointed out the time has come to put requirements on parents to be at these activities.

Vice Chair Pollard thanked everyone for their comments and pointed out that industry and business looks for strong educational systems and cultural opportunities for its employees when considering whether or not to locate in an area. She stated that the Board will take the night's comments under advisement as the Board begins to discuss the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

- The Vice Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.
-

Gary Phillips, Chairman

ATTEST:

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