

MINUTES
CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET HEARING
MAY 21, 2013

The Board of Commissioners (“the Board”) of the County of Chatham, North Carolina, met in the Siler City Courtroom at City Hall, 311 North Second Avenue, Siler City, North Carolina, 6:00 PM on May 21, 2013.

Present: Walter Petty, Chairman; Brian Bock, Vice Chair; Commissioner Mike Cross, Commissioner Sally Kost, and Pamela Stewart (arrived at 6:03)

Staff Present: Charlie Horne, County Manager; Lisa West, Budget Analyst; Vicki McConnell, Finance Officer, Sandra B. Sublett, Clerk to the Board; and Lindsay Ray, Deputy Clerk to the Board

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Agenda

FY 2013-2014 Recommended Budget Presentation: Presentation of the recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014

Lisa West, Chatham County Budget Analyst, presented a PowerPoint of the FY 2013-2014 Recommended Budget. The Powerpoint can be seen in the May 20, 2013 Board of Commissioners’ Regular Minutes.

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION

The Chairman opened the floor for public comments.

Sarah Lambert, Central Carolina Community College (CCCC), Siler City, NC, Board Member of the Chatham County Literacy Council, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Good evening, my name is Sara Lambert. I live at 50 Poplar Trail, Siler City. I am a Board Member of the Chatham County Literacy Council.

Imagine, if you will, having to look for a job. You enter a large retail store, knowing that they are currently hiring. You are told that if you have completed high school, or if you have your GED, you may go over to a computer, access the application, and complete it online. You did not graduate from high school and you have not used a computer. You feel frightened and leave. You hear that a manufacturing company is holding a Job Fair. You show up on the day of the Fair, prepared to impress the person hiring with your past work history. But instead, you are handed a printed application and asked for a cover letter and a resume. You cannot read very well and you don’t know everything that is being asked on the application. You have never had a resume and you don’t know what a cover letter is. You leave totally discouraged and still unemployed.

These are challenges faced by Chatham County residents who don’t have the literacy skills needed to get a job or to keep a job. The mission of the Chatham County Literacy

Council is to help adult residents gain the literacy skills they need to function successfully in our society. Our vision is to break the cycle of poverty caused by illiteracy and by the inability to speak, read, and write the English language. We offer one-on-one or small group tutoring with the goal of improving reading skills and giving adults the skills needed to get a job, improve their job performance, or gain citizenship.

The services we provide are free to all of our students. We rely on grant funds and private donations to support our budget, which pays wages to four part-time staff members, buys instructional materials, and supports volunteer training. Please consider additional funding to the Chatham County Literacy Council for this program year. Thank you for this opportunity.”

Erin Suwattana, PO Box 1531, Pittsboro, NC, Director of Child Care Networks, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Good evening and thank you for your time. I’m Erin Suwattana, Executive Director of Child Care Networks. I’m here to request funding to combat childhood obesity through our Child Care Food Program. It’s listed in the nonprofit request list inaccurately as ‘Adult Care Food Program.’ The name of the federal program is Child and Adult Care Food Program, but in our agency we only work with the child care side. Did you know that the federal Child Care Food Program allows a reimbursement to child care providers for feeding young children hot dogs, and counts fruit juice as a fruit serving? From reading the menus of many Chatham County child care providers we know that many of them do serve processed meats, more juice than fruit, and a limited variety of vegetables. We want to change this. We are requesting \$6000 to increase our nutrition education efforts, to promote truly healthy practices such as serving green leafy vegetables, beans, whole fruits and unprocessed meats. We will use workshops, one-on-one training and small incentives to help child care providers change their meal serving habits. There are 19 Chatham County child care programs that are enrolled in our program which serve meals to more than 300 children every day. If you want to see these 300 children, most of them under age 5, eating more unprocessed foods and starting their lives with healthy eating habits, please allocate count nonprofit funds to the Child Care Food Program. Without the county funds, we will continue to administer the basic federal reimbursements but will not have staff time to implement the enhanced nutrition education.”

Becky Loffin 499 Ronald Scott Road, Bear Creek, NC, and **Michelle Thompson**, Chatham Habitat for Humanity, 467 West Street, Pittsboro, NC, presented their comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“Over the last 20 years, Chatham Habitat for Humanity has placed 113 families in homes in Chatham County. Forty-five of these families have been in Siler City with the remaining in Pittsboro and surrounding areas.

This has helped tremendously with the tax base in Chatham County as well as been a great support to many needy families.

This Thursday, May 23rd, our Board of Directors will meet and we hope to approve at least three new families for housing, two of which will locate in the Siler City area.

We currently have two homes in the process of remodeling in Siler City and are planning two more units in 2013/2014. We are asking for your support with building these homes, by requesting \$10,000.00 from Chatham County. All funds would be used to provide safe, affordable housing and free up affordable rental property.

Chatham Habitat for Humanity is committed to Western Chatham County and with your financial support, we will be able to help two families from this area move into warm and safe homes.”

Lesley Landis, 21 Randolph Court, Pittsboro, NC, presented her comments to the Board and provided them in their entirety for the record as follows:

“My name is Lesley Landis. I live at 21 Randolph Court in Pittsboro. I’m here today to ask you to approve the \$5000 funding for the Chatham County Arts Council as recommended by the Community Grant Panel.

Here’s why:

Chatham County is a very special place. The Chatham County Arts Council knows it. We celebrate it...and our work makes Chatham County even better.

Our reach is a wide one. Since 2001 Chatham Arts has sub-granted about \$100,000 in Grassroots Arts Grants to local non-profit agencies. Grantors have included The NC Arts Incubator, Chatham Together, Chatham Trades, Family Violence Rape Crisis Services, the Chatham Artists Guild, the Autism Society of NC, Childcare Networks, and the Chatham County School System, among others.

The list is diverse and so are the projects that money has funded. Projects have ranged from reducing hunger, improving literacy, assisting with developmental disabilities, preserving our environmental resources, and the education of our residents and children and building job skills.

Yes, the arts are jobs. The Arts Mean Business.

N.C. Department of Cultural Resources Secretary Susan Kluttz announced recently that the findings from the annual Creative Vitality Index (CVI) update shows an increase of more than 8% in creative occupations – i.e. jobs.

These jobs are held by nearly 3-percent of North Carolina's workforce – that’s significant. Creative occupations include jobs such as Publishing and Printing; Artists; Galleries; Design Services; and Design Manufacturing.

So North Carolina’s creative workforce has remained strong despite the recession and that tells us that jobs in the creative industries and creative workers are vital to the overall economy of our towns and cities.

‘Beyond supporting the intrinsic value of the arts, we can document the role of the arts in creating jobs, revitalizing downtowns and bringing visitors to our state.’

The North Carolina Arts Incubator proves this. The Incubator has served as a nexus for new businesses, such as Courtyard Coffee (the social hub of downtown Siler City), and independent art studio/galleries, among them Raleigh Street Gallery, Reptire Designs, Person-to-Person Gallery, Against His Will Studio and Gallery, Joel Hunnicutt, and McInturff Guitars.

People have relocated to Siler City to be near the NC Arts Incubator. Proving what Secretary Kluttz says ‘An investment in the arts is an investment in a growth industry that supports jobs, generates government revenue, and is one of the cornerstones of tourism.’

Please fund the Chatham County Arts Council with \$5000 as we continue to work for a more robust creative culture in Chatham County.”

Ed Spence, 68 Pinewood Drive, Siler City, NC, thanked the Board and stated that they had been able to raise approximately \$200,000 for the Boys and Girls Club and renovated a building. He stated that they are most grateful for what the Board has already done to make this endeavor possible. He stated that their ribbon cutting is Sunday, June 09, 2013 at 3:00 PM. He stated that all Board members would receive a written invitation to attend. He appreciates what the Board has done in the past and would appreciate consideration for the next year. He invited everyone to come to the Boys and Girls Club and see what a difference they are making on young men and women.

Karl Ernst, 711 Red Oak Drive, Siler City, NC, commended the Board for their efforts in financial management. He applauded the Board stating they had done a great job as they have had some hard choices to make with regard to funding issues including nonprofits. He stated that this past weekend at the Lions Club State Convention, they got together on Saturday afternoon and hand-packed 10,000 ready-to-eat and will be distributed to the folks who need them as soon as possible.

He stated that if he had \$5,000, he would put it toward feeding the children. There are several programs in the County that do a great job with that.

Travis Cohn, PO Box 110, Siler City, NC, thanked the Board and stated that there were a lot of different needs to meet for Chatham residents. He stated that people are basically spiritual creatures. That is where the arts come in as they provide nourishment. Self-esteem, humor, imagination, inspiration, engagement, and interaction are all things that the arts provide the people. Life would be much different without the arts and imagination: no Superman, no Wonder Woman, no Daffy Duck, etc. All were creations of the artists' imagination. Without the arts, the world would be a pretty dull, bleak, meaningless place. The fruits of our imagination make life worth living.

Susan Baker, 605 North Fir Avenue, Siler City, NC, stated that she is an artist on the side. She stated that she wanted to express basic support for this extraordinarily small amount of money going to the Chatham Arts Council. She stated that she did not envy the Board, having a limited amount of money, and a lot of excellent programs to look at. She asked that when the Board makes their final decision, they don't think of funding the arts as not feeding the children. She stated that there is a danger in that type of conceptualization of art versus food. Everything is important. Art is definitely important. The arts community has depended on the larger community to provide some of this support. She stated that they don't live in a monarchy anymore. We have to support the finer elements of life, the soul of the city, the soul of a county, and the soul requires its own type of food and some of the food is that \$5,000.

Debbie England 8804 Rollingwood Road, Chapel Hill, NC, stated that she is a full-time artist. She currently serves as the clay studio manager for the North Carolina Arts Incubator. She stated that she also spends two days a week turning at Cole Pottery in Sanford. She just finished her degree from CCCC in sculpture and spent the last three years in Siler City. She stated that she thinks Siler City and Chatham County are great places for art. She spends First Sunday in front of Joyful Jewel doing wheel demonstrations. She sells her art out of the gallery at the incubator. She stated that she has had people drive from Greensboro to Pittsboro to the Joyful Jewel to buy her art. She stated that she spent last Saturday at a show in Durham County where she welcomed people to come to Chatham County and to Siler City to her studio at the North Carolina Arts Incubator. They were happy to come. She stated that she has lived in Orange County for thirty-five years, but she drives from Orange County to Chatham County because of the way art is treated in Chatham County. She stated that she appreciated the Board's time to listen to her.

Larry Cooper, PO Box 442, Siler City, NC, stated that he came from Wisconsin about one and a half years ago. When driving into Chatham County and looking for a place in which to live, they saw a sign saying "Siler City Downtown District". They came in, parked, and visited the area. A few months later, they discovered the arts scene. He is now on the North Carolina Arts Incubator Board of Directors and brought his businesses to Siler City. He stated that he is a full-time blacksmith, has a national market, and produces gardening tools. He stated that he wanted to be in Siler City because of the density of artists. They have 121 artists out of the seven places he counted and 36 working artists. Those are within a three-block area of Siler City. He stated that the arts need the support as it is not all about art, it's about business.

Dr. John Dykers, 1783 Alston Bridge Road, Pittsboro, NC, stated that he retired from practicing medicine for forty-five years. He stated that he now has a second patent and copyright that has been approved and is the process of trying to move those into commercial viability. Moving something from an idea to commercial is a difficult process. He stated

that he would like to be able to do that in Siler City. One of the things that will help in doing that is having an arts community that is attractive to people who want to come work for us.

Lynn Hoffman, Blue Heron Farm, Pittsboro, NC, stated that he has a ten year old daughter that unwinds from her stress through arts, writing, drawing, etc. It helps her cope with her daily stress of not fitting in with other kids at school. Chatham County is a great place to have a support network of other artists to talk with and be mentored by. For a kid, it is great to be exposed to that early on and have those resources available. It is not just about the art, it's a matter of mental health as well. It is a way of expressing daily struggles or whatever it might be. He stated that he thinks it is something that should be looked at again with regard to funding. It is community well-being for a lot of folks.

The Chairman closed the floor for public comments.

Maggi Neuffer, sent written comments to the Clerk to the Board for inclusion in the official minutes as follows:

“Arts in Chatham County generate tourism with tours, dollars with performances and art sales, education, and entertainment.”

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and adjourned the meeting at 6:38 PM.

Walter Petty, Chairman

ATTEST:

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