



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Thursday, May 21, 2020

9:00 AM

Agriculture and Conference Center

Budget Work Session

CALL TO ORDER

Present: 5 - Chair Karen Howard, Vice Chair Diana Hales, Commissioner Jim Crawford, Commissioner Mike Dasher and Commissioner Andy Wilkie

BOARD PRIORITIES

[20-3498](#)

Introduction

Attachments: [FY21 Budget Work Session Draft](#)

Budget Director Lisa West gave an overview of budget priorities. (Presentation attached)

Budget Analyst Darrell Butts gave a presentation on the recommended budget for FY21.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether the Serve Safe class would be conducted by the County. Mr. Butts stated the class would be proctored by a County employee. Vice Chair Hales asked who monitors whether or not restaurant owners are taking the test. Mr. Butts stated Environmental Health monitors that. Vice Chair Hales asked whether it covers PFA testing. County Manager Dan LaMontagne stated PFA testing could be contracted out.

[20-3499](#)

Revenue

Attachments: [FY21 Budget Work Session Draft](#)

Vice Chair Hales asked why Watershed Protection revenues were down. Mr. Butts stated that Watershed Protection revenues can change quickly and it just depends on what projects are coming in. Ms. West stated that Watershed Protection is the hardest department for projecting revenues.

Vice Chair Hales asked who determines the value of motor vehicles for tax purposes. Deputy County Manager and Finance Director Vicki McConnell stated the state contracts with a service to determine value.

[20-3500](#)

Expense

Attachments: [FY21 Budget Work Session Draft](#)

Commissioner Dasher asked about conducting a fleet mileage study and whether we have the staff capacity to conduct it ourselves. Mr. LaMontagne stated he was following up on that question.

Chair Howard asked whether, given the many current economic unknowns, now is the time for expenses such as portable bleachers. Ms. West stated we could monitor revenues each quarter to see when we should move forward with those expenses. Chair Howard asked whether the Board will make time today to identify some things that it does not want to revisit.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether it was Duke Energy's rate change that was driving the increased budget for electricity at the Justice Center. Ms. West stated it was both the rate change and that the courts use a lot of electricity. Mr. LaMontagne stated the HVAC system was the biggest driver of electricity use in the courthouse.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether money was budgeted for solar power. Ms. West stated they are looking for grant money to put towards solar power.

Chair Howard asked whether more children will use Chatham Promise because of the virus. Ms. West stated that was likely.

Commissioner Dasher asked whether the schools are seeing decreased operating costs due to the virus. Chair Howard stated there were likely some operating costs that would be increasing. Mr. LaMontagne stated there are many unknowns because some expenses may be covered by state and federal funding.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether money could be moved to move forward on the Haw River Trail. Mr. LaMontagne stated he was concerned that expanding the trail would lead to push back from some adjacent homeowners. Commissioner Dasher asked whether there were park projects the County has planned for that are no longer moving forward. Mr. LaMontagne stated there were none for the next fiscal year.

Vice Chair Hales asked what the Covid-19 related election expenses were. Ms. West stated it included partitions, staff to help enforce social distancing, and other various things. Assistant County Manager Bryan Thompson stated there will likely be state and federal funding to help support election expenses.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether the budget included funding for the Executive Director of Chatham Trades. Ms. West stated that it does. Commissioner Dasher asked what percentage of Chatham Trades' budget comes from the County. Ms. West stated 16.5% of Chatham Trades' budget comes from the County.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether Chatham Health Alliance was going to grow by \$20,000. Mr. LaMontagne stated the funding was staying the same, just coming from a different source.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether the focus of nonprofit allocations was to reduce poverty. Ms. West stated that reducing poverty was listed as the goal of nonprofit allocations.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether building inspectors are covered by their fees. Mr. Butts stated they are partially covered by fees but not 100%.

Commissioner Wilkie asked whether occupancy tax goes all to the County or if some

of it goes to the Town of Pittsboro. Ms. West stated it all goes to the County.

Commissioner Crawford stated that, given the restrictions caused by the virus, the County should focus advertising on attracting residents of Durham and Wake County to take day trips or "daycations" to Chatham County.

The County Manager will talk with the Chamber, Arts Council, EDC and other groups to get the talks going and plant the seed on working together for local economic development. The Board agreed this effort should not be driven by county government.

The Board agreed not to fund Mainstreet Pittsboro's request at this time. Commissioners prefer to wait for the effort to be coordinated by the organizations/stakeholders and they would like to see a plan to generate the visitors.

Chair Howard asked whether the grant that Court Programs Director Renita Foxx applied for was a state grant. Ms. West stated the grant was a federal grant. Vice Chair Hales asked if the Family Visitation Center was a part of the Detention Center. Mr. LaMontagne stated it was not.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether Naloxone is supplied to libraries. Mr. LaMontagne stated it is only provided to deputies.

Chair Howard asked whether Animal Services will be able to meet its expectations without additional staff. Ms. West stated they should be able to meet their expectations. Commissioner Dasher asked if there was a staffing study done for Animal Services. Mr. LaMontagne stated that was something they would look into. Chair Howard stated she believed it would be beneficial to conduct a study looking into how to reduce animal intakes in the county. Ms. West said a similar study was conducted several years ago.

Chair Howard asked how the County knows what to put into the Jordan Lake Allocation fund. Mr. LaMontagne stated the County had a firm conduct a financial analysis to determine that amount. Chair Howard asked whether what is being put into the fund accounts for future expenses. Mr. LaMontagne stated that it does to an extent.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether the fire district structure is mandated by the state or could be changed at the county level. Mr. LaMontagne stated that it was statutory.

Vice Chair Hales asked what the Coal Ash funds were spent on. Mr. LaMontagne stated the funds were spent on a wastewater system.

[20-3501](#)

Discussion

The Board asked staff to ask the NCACC for help looking at the recruitment of fire fighters, especially in rural areas. Commissioner Dasher will reach out to Moncure Fire Chief Robert Shi to see if he can go back to his board and ask if the lower amount would do any good or is it an all or nothing request. Commissioner Dasher will ask Chief Shi if he can submit a revised request to the County Manager. There was consensus of the Board that it will accept a request for a lower increase in the fire rate from the Moncure Fire Department of 0.135 (the original request of 0.145 was not acceptable to the Board). The Board also asked staff to see if there are studies in Chatham County and the state about firefighter pay across districts.

Vice Chair Hales asked whether the schools are in charge of designing their own

administration building. Mr. LaMontagne stated that they are. Vice Chair Hales asked if the school building design included solar power. Mr. LaMontagne stated he has had discussions about including solar power and will follow up with school administration.

Vice Chair Hales asked about giving employees a bonus day in lieu of a pay raise. Mr. Butts stated that an extra paid vacation day could be added to employees' balance. Chair Howard asked whether a bonus day would be provided to contractors. Mr. LaMontagne stated that it would not. It would only be provided to those who would have gotten a pay raise. Commissioner Dasher asked if the Board could adopt a resolution in June stating employees will get two additional vacation days in FY21.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Hales, seconded by Commissioner Dasher, to approve giving County employees two additional days of vacation (sixteen hours for full time employees and eight hours for part time employees) for FY2021. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Chair Howard, Vice Chair Hales, Commissioner Crawford, Commissioner Dasher and Commissioner Wilkie

The County Manager recommended the Board not give him a raise in FY21.

Chair Howard recommended that the County Manager, Register of Deeds, and Sheriff not receive raises due to the current economic circumstances. The Board agreed by consensus.

Commissioner Dasher asked if there were options to change the budget if the economic impact of COVID-19 turns out to be much less than anticipated. Mr. LaMontagne stated that the budget could be amended if that happened.

Staff reviewed the following action items:

- Mr. LaMontagne will get the BOC an update on the Open Broadband from Darlene Yudell.
- Mr. LaMontagne will follow up with the Sheriff about a study by the Animal Services director on how to have a more global approach to animal services.
- Mr. LaMontagne will follow up with the schools on solar.
- Staff will share quarterly revenue with the Board going forward.
- The Board would like staff to look into any studies about firefighter pay across districts. Are there any studies for Chatham County or the state?
- There will be an email sent to all staff from Chair Howard letting employees know about receiving two extra vacation days. The Board may also adopt a resolution announcing this in June.

ADJOURNMENT