

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, June 6, 2022

11:00 AM

Budget Work Session

Second Floor Conference Room

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair William Sands
Commissioner Chuck Olive
Commissioner Jerry D. Powers
Commissioner Jonathan Jordan*

BUSINESS SESSION

I. 11:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse

Chairman McNeill called the Budget Work Session to order at 11:00 a.m. in the second floor conference room at the Ashe County Courthouse.

Present: 5 - Commissioner Chuck Olive, Chairperson Todd McNeill, Vice Chairman William Sands, Commissioner Jerry D. Powers and Commissioner Jonathan Jordan

Governing Body

The Board will revisit the request from Generations Ashe to increase the appropriation for the volunteer coordinator position to \$36,859.

Administration

No changes were made.

Finance

No changes were made.

Legal

No changes were made.

Courts

No changes were made.

Board of Elections

No changes were made.

Register of Deeds

No changes were made.

Information Technology

No changes were made.

Public Buildings

No changes were made.

Education

School Superintendent Dr. Cox and Finance Officer Amanda Coldiron were present to

answer questions regarding the proposed budget for Ashe County Schools. Dr. Cox made a proposal that instead of the County funding paving for the high school parking lot, that Ashe County Schools would be responsible to patch some of the most needed areas of the parking lot. A request is being made for the County to allocate \$1,435,486 as follows: utilize \$834,172 for underfunded salary and step increases and allocate \$276,453 for supplement increases for all staff. Dr. Cox explained that the State increased state-paid teacher and instructional support supplements by \$1651. The Ashe County Schools budget is short \$141,055 to provide all certified employees with the additional amount. Classified supplements also need to be increased. Dr. Cox told the Board that even with this funding, Ashe County Schools will not be competitive with surrounding school districts certified staff unless the County funds the entire proposed supplement. In addition, an allocation of \$171,889 is requested for custodial vehicles for each school, and \$152,889 is requested for various items such as: tree removal, drain repair, headphones, kitchen ventilation, uniforms, helmets, canopies, a floor scrubber, vape detectors, a storage building, a sound system upgrade, tile replacement, carpet removal, and restroom refurbishment. Dr. Cox further explained that an allocation of \$604,639 is needed for supplements to make Ashe County School competitive with surrounding districts. This would require the County to allocate an additional \$328,186 on top of what has been proposed and covered by the parking lot paving change. The remainder of the proposed budget from the County would remain the same. Finance Officer Sandra Long explained that funding from Articles 40 and 42 sales taxes designated for schools can only be used for capital outlay and cannot be spent on employees.

Tax Administration

County Manager Adam Stumb and Tax Administrator Chris Lambert explained to the Board that they have been working with GE Aviation for several years due to possible double taxation. Chris Lambert explained that an audit firm has been working with GE Aviation and found that they overlisted \$172 million in property over a three-year time period, which is the equivalent of \$395,242.69 in taxable dollars. GE Aviation is requesting a refund of the overpayment in taxes. They have put safeguards into place to keep this from happening again. Chris Lambert told the Board that by statute, GE Aviation is eligible for the requested refund.

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert told the Board that he requested two vehicles in the budget. He has enough funds in the current year's budget to fund one of the vehicles and therefore will only need funding for one vehicle in the FY2022-23 budget, reducing Capital Outlay/Vehicles by approximately half. A request is being made to move Tax Appraisers to a system that will reward them as they obtain certifications and education. This system is comparable to what other counties do with their appraisers. Based on their certifications, two employees are being raised to a Grade 66.

Education

The Board continued discussion regarding the budget request for Education which is a \$1.9 million difference in what was proposed. Finance Officer Sandra Long stated that the request being made will be an ongoing yearly commitment by the Board. The Board will revisit this request after further research.

Communications

Brian Greer, chief telecommunicator, told the Board that the current dispatch equipment is 16 years old. He presented quotes to replace the equipment and provided information on grants applied for. American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds can be used for the project

which will take six to nine months to complete.

Law Enforcement

Sheriff Howell presented information on the following requests made in the Law Enforcement budget. Executive Assistant Jessica Vogler and Chief Deputy Danny Houck were also present to answer questions from the Board.

**A grant in the amount of \$34,787.02 was received to provide training for a program called Internet Crimes Against Children. Funding will need to be placed into the budget to cover a matching funds requirement.*

**A pay grade request for Captain Carrow should be included in the grade raise request given to detention officers. She was omitted as an oversight.*

**A night shift pay differential request was included in an attempt to retain night shift employees especially in the jail where it is difficult to recruit and retain employees. This request was not granted in either department.*

**A request for an increase in overtime pay in the jail as a solution to staffing issues. Earning comp time would be eliminated and the employee would be paid overtime if working over their 12-hour shift. This would be addressed through an increase in the Corrections line item for Salaries/Wages Overtime with an increase to \$14,000.*

**A request to change the commissary company could increase profits to 40%.*

**A request to change Wi-Fi hotspot boxes from Verizon to Carolina West will decrease monthly costs.*

**A request was made to reclassify pay grades for four front office clerical staff positions utilizing extra pay from a recent retirement to restructure office pay. This request was not granted.*

**A request to utilize American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding for improvements to the third floor of the Law Enforcement Center. This request was not included in the Law Enforcement or Corrections budget.*

II. Recess

The meeting was recessed at approximately 5:00 p.m. and will resume at 9:00 a.m. on June 7, 2022.

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