

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, June 6, 2017

9:00 AM

Budget Work Session

Second Floor Conference Room

County Commission

*Chairman William Sands
Vice Chair Paula Perry
Commissioner Jeff Rose
Commissioner Gary Roark
Commissioner Larry Rhodes*

BUDGET SESSION**I. 9:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Courthouse**

Chairman Sands called the Budget Work Session to order at approximately 9:10 a.m. in the second floor conference room at the Ashe County Courthouse.

Education

School Superintendent Phyllis Yates and Finance Officer Amanda Coldiron were present to speak to the Board regarding the budget for Schools. Ms. Yates thanked the Board for fully funding capital needs for Schools. She explained the request of \$652,372 for Current Expense due to a projected loss in State funding of \$469,129. She proposed the County share in that loss on a 50-50 basis. If that is not possible, another option is for the County to provide monies for the Local Fund in the amount of \$183,215. The Local Fund includes \$70,000 to repair facilities and \$65,000 for programs to help high risk students in grades 7 - 12. Ms. Yates explained that mental health issues are affecting millions of students across the nation. School counselors are not trained to handle mental health issues. Several years ago, Schools partnered with Appalachian State University on the Assessment, Support & Counseling (ASC) Program to address mental health issues. Last year the program was funded through a grant from the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC), but this year the program will not be funded. Since this program has been in effect, there have not been any suicides committed by high school students. Ms. Yates listed benefits of the program and the push to fund the program counselor, which would be a new position. New expenses for the upcoming year include funding for Cyber Crime insurance in the amount of \$9456, payment to add the third season for an athletic trainer for students at \$2100. \$36,659 will cover the projected salary increases and benefits for employees based on the proposed State budget with the balance in funding coming from projected shortages resulting from the State budget.

County Manager Sam Yearick explained that funding from the State for Schools will not be finalized until August. It would be better for the school superintendent to come back and request additional funding if it is needed. He recommended that the commissioners budget a 2% increase for Schools and allow them to utilize the funds as needed.

County Manager Yearick updated the Board on School Capital Outlay. The County funds \$100,000 and any monies above that is utilized from the Schools sales tax monies.

Public Buildings

Maintenance Director Gary Roark stated that he would like to change the pay grade for Sammy Whicker and Rodney Hopkins to grade 62. Chairman Sands stated that if both employees have the same job responsibilities, that they need to be moved to pay grade 61. The Board was in agreement to change both employees to grade 61. (Commissioner Roark was not involved in the "agreement" due to a conflict of interest because he is employed as the County's maintenance director.)

No further changes were made.

Emergency Management

No changes were made.

Fire

No changes were made.

Tax Administration

Tax Administrator Chris Lambert updated the Board on the purchase of new software for the Tax Office. He received two quotes for the software. The company that was selected quoted the lowest bid amount and will integrate with other County departments such as the Register of Deeds, Finance, and Building Inspections. By utilizing the software, one position in the Tax Office will be eliminated. The person in that position has already moved to another vacant position. In addition, the need for a part-time person during property revaluation will be eliminated. The software will also save costs associated with Tax Mapping. Real Property Appraisal Supervisor Mike Hobbs provided information regarding the real estate and appraisal portion of the software. He told the Board that it will save several steps over the current system being used. The software will cut down on duplication and errors. Citizens will have the opportunity to file appeals online eliminating the need to come into the office. Delinquent Tax Collector Ann Kitz explained that the current system is not Windows-based. The new system is Windows-based and will automatically group all parcels for the same person together.

County Manager Yearick recommended in the proposed budget that \$280,000 be placed in Capital Outlay/Other Improvements for the new software.

No further comments were offered.

Law Enforcement

County Manager Sam Yearick told the Board that he used fuel reports and mileage reports to come up with the four law enforcement vehicles that he recommends should be replaced. He also recommends that a new deputy position be placed in the budget. Commissioner Rhodes suggested that three patrol vehicles be replaced in this year's budget. Commissioner Rhodes questioned the possibility of creating a pool of vehicles that are not assigned to individual departments.

No further comments were made.

Human Services

A Safe Home for Everyone (ASHE) - Deanna Stoker, executive director with ASHE, told the Board that as of May 31, 2017 they have served 246 adults and children, resulting in a 17% increase in the number of people served over the previous year. They receive calls from the hotline on 3 out of 4 weekends. Ms. Stoker explained that there has been a large increase in services required for children and for clients that are pregnant. This year's budget for ASHE is \$386,519 of which the County appropriates \$10,000. She provided an explanation of what County funding is used for. In addition, fundraisers contribute \$20,000 per year. ASHE operates with four full-time employees and one part-time employee.

Ashe Memorial Hospital - Commissioner Rhodes referred to a recent article on the financial struggles of hospitals. He recommended adding 1 cent to the property tax rate for Ashe Memorial Hospital to continue funding each year. (1 cent is equivalent to \$374,380). An announcement needs to be made so that citizens are aware of what the

tax increase is being used for. The Board was in agreement with the recommendation.

A Safe Home for Everyone (ASHE) - Commissioner Roark suggested moving funding for the Hospitality House to ASHE or to increase the annual appropriation to \$15,000. The Board was in agreement to leave both appropriations as they are recommended in the budget.

No further comments were made.

Veterans

No changes were made.

Library

County Manager Yearick told the Board that he recommended a 2% increase for the Library, the same as he did for the Health Department.

No further comments were made.

Cultural Arts

County Manager Yearick told the Board that he recommended \$22,000 be placed in the budget line for Professional Services to use for economic development projects such as the new fishing map.

No further comments were made.

Medical Examiner

No changes were made.

Building Inspections

County Manager Yearick told the Board that he recommended a new truck for Building Inspections in this year's budget. The inspectors average driving approximately 200 miles per day.

No further comments were made.

Planning

No changes were made.

Economic Development

No changes were made.

Cooperative Extension

County Manager Yearick told the Board that a request was made to add a position for Family Consumer Services but he did not recommend this position in the budget. The

recently retired director of Cooperative Extension handled the duties of this position which include issues pertaining to water quality, household mold, training for ServSafe food workers, home food preservation, cooking classes for adults and children, and radon programming and testing. The cost to the County for the position is shared with NC State University and is \$17,000 per year.

County Manager Yearick explained that the support staff person at Cooperative Extension has moved into the Administrative Assistant position due to a retirement. County Manager Yearick asked the Board for approval to post this position. The Board was in agreement to post the vacant position.

Commissioners Sands, Perry, Roark and Rose were in agreement for the Cooperative Extension budget to remain as recommended by the county manager. Commissioner Rhodes was not in agreement due to the duties listed above for the Family Consumer Services position.

No further comments were made.

Soil Conservation

No changes were made.

Ambulance & Rescue

No changes were made.

Social Services

DSS Director Tracie McMillan and Accounting Specialist Kelly Surber were present to provide an explanation of the budget and to answer questions from the Board regarding the DSS budget.

The DSS Director provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the budget. Highlights included positions removed or reduced in work hours and the resulting effect on the bottom line for salaries. Total savings from the changes amount to \$164,211. She provided an explanation of increases totaling \$67,655 which reduce the amount of total savings to \$96,556. Ms. McMillan provided information on the number of children investigated for reported abuse and neglect and the number of children receiving In-Home Services. She reported on the increased number of children in Foster Care and staffing requirements necessary due to the increase.

County Manager Yearick told the Board that he recommended contracting an attorney for DSS as opposed to the in-house attorney the County has. He spoke of financial considerations for having a contracted attorney and that the trend is spreading across the state. The county manager told the Board that an offer was made to contract the DSS attorney position for \$70,000 per year from an out-of-state firm. Commissioner Rhodes stated that the current attorney for DSS has 19 years experience working for the County DSS Department. When that person retires, the commissioners could consider making a change at that time. Commissioner Rose added that the difference in cost is \$19,300 and he would not recommend a change. Vice Chairman Perry commented on all of the behind the scenes work that the DSS attorney does and that we should not just look at the cost. The Board was in agreement to make no changes to the DSS attorney position.

County Manager Yearick spoke to the Board and explained expenses for Foster Care in the budget. He explained the request for a van and a Chevy Equinox. Next, a request was made to change the grade/step for the position of Accounting Specialist I to 71/2. The Board was in agreement with the change. A request was made for the LINKS (Independent Living Services for Foster Children) position to change from a part time to a full time position. The Board was in agreement with making this position full time. Also requested was a lead full time position in Adult Services. The Board was also in agreement with this request.

No further changes were made.

Communications

No changes were made.

E911 Coordinator

County Manager Yearick explained that \$684,901 was placed in Capital Outlay Equipment for new communications equipment.

Airport

County Manager Yearick recommended that the pay grade for the airport manager be changed to grade 72. The Board was in agreement.

No further changes were made.

Recess

The meeting was recessed at 5:00 p.m. and will continue on June 7, 2017 beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Citizens with disabilities requiring special needs to access the services or public meetings of Ashe County Government should contact the County Manager's Office three days prior to the meeting by calling (336) 846-5501.

William Sands, Chairman

Ann J. Clark, MMC, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board