

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY
JUNE 7, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE CARMON AUDITORIUM
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN LEONARD WIGGINS AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Leonard Wiggins, Chairman, Rev. E. Wayne Hines, Vice-Chairman, Mr. Ralph Webb, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mr. Donald Boswell, Mr. William Wooten and Mrs. Viola Harris.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Eric Evans, County Manager, Mrs. Natalie Bess, Deputy County Manager, Mr. Michael Peters, County Attorney and Ms. Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.

Mrs. Bess provided safety instructions.

3. PRAYER.

Rev. Hines provided the prayer.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2021 meeting as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Evans stated that at the recommendation of Mr. Webb, they thought it would be fitting to have a Moment of Silence to remember those young people from the County that recently lost their lives in the tragic automobile accident.

Mr. Webb read the names of those who lost their lives: J. T. Winstead, Devin Wilson, Madison Wilson and Abby Foster (Farmville).

5. PUBLIC HEARING.

1. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizen comments and questions relative to the proposed fiscal year 2021-2022 Edgecombe County budget.

Mr. Peters read the public notice as published.

Mr. Evans read the following budget message.

Submitted herein is the Edgecombe County recommended Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022. The Budget is balanced in its entirety, as required by the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. We have approached the preparation of this budget with the following goals in mind:

- balancing the budget without a tax increase;
- making cuts where possible without compromising operations and services;
- addressing critical capital needs;
- addressing critical needs of key outside agencies as much as possible; and
- providing a reasonable cost of living increase.

Budget Overview

The proposed ad valorem tax rate for the FY 21-22 is 95 cents per \$100 value, which is no change from the current year. One cent generates approximately \$343,000. The County's proposed budget for FY 21-22 totals \$81,973,867, including enterprise funds (Water/Sewer and Solid Waste). The proposed budget is an increase of \$6,529,056 or 8.7% from the original budget of the current year. The proposed budget includes a fund balance appropriation of \$8,483,245 from general fund, which is slightly down from the current year's original fund balance appropriation of \$8,753,824.

The main contributor to the budget increase is the addition of Emergency Medical Services, with a net increase of \$4,084,422. Other contributors include rising health insurance claims, the cost of living increase, additional costs for outside agencies, and additional debt service.

We have received notice that we will be allocated \$9,980,000 in total of American Rescue Han (ARP) funds, half within the next 30-days. One eligible use of funds is to cover the costs of staff that are involved in the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Based on the guidelines we've received, we anticipate that ARP funds can be

substituted for portions of salaries in the Health Department, Emergency Services, and Maintenance totaling \$2,059,275. This will further reduce the outlay of fund balance for next fiscal year.

KEY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Revenues

We expect our tax collection rate to end this year at least at 95%, which is above the 94.5% from last fiscal year. You will recall that we saw our collection rate decline from 95.82% in FY-19. We believe the cause was the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on citizens ability to pay.

Though sales tax revenues have been trending upward since FY-17, and well above our conservative budget estimates, we do anticipate ending this fiscal year almost \$385,000 below FY-20. However, what we have collected so far this fiscal year (\$8,544,911) is well above the \$6,655,000 we budgeted. I have increased the budget for sales tax for FY-22 to be truer to collections and to mitigate the impact to fund balance appropriated. That conservative budget is still below what we will likely receive.

Personnel

A Cost of Living Adjustment of 2% is included in this budget. The cost of this COLA is approximately \$530,000, including benefits. I am pleased to share that we do not have an increase in our premium costs for health insurance. This proposed budget does include a 3% increase in allocation for health insurance premiums in order to build up our reserve in the health insurance fund at a cost of approximately \$160,000.

The health plan will continue to include a Health Savings Account (HSA) option that includes a \$750 contribution by the County. We will also continue to provide health screenings for all individuals covered by our plan. Individuals who choose not to participate in the screening will pay \$50 per month towards the cost of their insurance.

In addition to medical, dental, and life insurance, employees have a number of cafeteria plans to select from. We will also continue to offer:

- the Health Map RX program for staff with chronic diseases who choose to participate;
- the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which offers counseling and other "work-life" services through both telephonic and face-to-face sessions; and

- a wellness incentive of \$250 for those meeting the waist circumference standards or making 5% improvement in weight or waist.

1. At the recommendation of the Budget Committee, \$325,000 has been added to the Sheriff's Detention Center budget under salaries and related

lines. This will enable the Sheriff to increase salaries for detention officers. You will recall this is in addition to the \$350,000 added to this current year's budget for salary increases in the Sheriff's office, which is maintained in this budget and inclusive of the 2% COLA.

Capital Outlay

This budget includes capital outlay expenditures for County operations of \$518,695, which is down by \$541,305 from this year's capital outlay budget. I have included only those projects that will not be completed in the current year and to be rolled forward, as well as a few other items that are critical and need to be undertaken at the start of the fiscal year. To minimize the impact to fund balance, I have listed items that are needed, and ask you to reconsider in the new fiscal year. These total \$633,000. Attached is a detailed list of the proposed capital expenditures.

Included in debt service is \$250,000 for both the final payment on the existing loan for the Sheriff's vehicles purchased in 2019, as well as the first payment on a new loan to purchase approximately 15 vehicles for the Sheriff's office.

Governing Board

The budget for the Governing Board has remained mostly unchanged. There are some outside agencies that were previously budgeted here that have been moved to other lines to be more appropriately grouped with other outside agencies. Also, at the recommendation of the Personnel Committee of the Board, the stipend for Commissioners is increased by \$150 per month.

Solid Waste

We just received notice that our contract fee with the regional landfill for municipal solid waste is increasing 10%. This is driven by increased transportation costs. I am currently reviewing a proposed rate increase that will balance the need to cover our costs, as well as maintain some competitive balance with surrounding landfills. There may be a need to also increase the solid waste fee that is billed to all property owners. I will have that final recommendation for you before the passage of this budget at your later meeting.

Water & Sewer

At this time, we have not received notification of a water and sewer rate increase from our suppliers, Rocky Mount and Tarboro. Our current rates are sufficient to cover the cost of operations. Therefore, I recommend no change to our water and sewer rates at this time.

Outside Agencies

The total requested by outside agencies is \$16,010,842, which is \$1,927,317 above what is allocated this current year. We received a request from two new outside agencies this year. However, with our own budget constraints, and the uncertainty of the impact of the pandemic, I do not recommend funding any new agencies this coming fiscal year. The total I recommend for outside agency funding is \$14,492,450. This is an increase of \$408,925 for outside agencies. This increase includes \$120,000 to Nash County for our proportionate share of the debt service on the new elementary school to be constructed in Red Oak.

My recommendation is that most of the agencies receive no increase from the current year's budget. The changes I do propose are based on ongoing agreements, formula calculations, and statutory requirements. The only exceptions are the following.

- To increase the current expense appropriation for Edgecombe County Schools by \$100,000 to fund the District Transition and Redesign position.
- To increase the capital outlay appropriation for Edgecombe Community College by \$25,000 to cover the cost of HVAC repairs.

Five volunteer fire departments are requesting an increase in their fire tax. I recommend we call for separate public hearings for citizens in those districts to have the opportunity to make their opinions known before taking action on these increases.

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor the budget closely throughout the year, save where we can and spend only when necessary. I appreciate the hard work of all of our staff who were involved in this long process, and I thank the Budget Committee for your guidance and time invested.

I respectfully submit this proposed budget for Fiscal Year 21-22.

Mr. Evans recommended that the Board hold off on approval of the budget until the June 21st meeting.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comment.

Nathlyn Ohree, 1713 Beverly Road, Rocky Mount, NC, stated that she was present to advocate for the increase in funding for the Sheriff's Office in comparison to the other Sheriff's Departments across the state. She stated that as we prepare for the new normal we will need to maintain the tranquility and safety of our County. We may be moving into a new normal, but there are the same old sins lurking in the corners and we need to be able to keep, and encourage, and inspire our Sheriff to stick with us. We need able bodied and courageous people to go forward, to represent us in times of need and in times of despair. Mrs. Ohree stated that this is why she is here advocating that Board look at the other Sheriff salaries across the State to make sure that our Sheriff's Department is funded equitably.

Curmilus Dancy II, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro, P O Box 1391 Pinetops, NC, read the following:

Greetings Commissioners, County Manager & Budget Committee,

I would like to begin by saying that it is interesting that it is on the agenda about the public hearing for the budget however I strongly feel that citizens should be told that they can find the proposed budget on the website. Most folk like myself that don't visit the website often would not think they have access to it.

I visited the website on yesterday after asking was there a digital copy to learn it was. After viewing the budget I have a serious problem with the Sheriff's Office line item.

I read, "At the recommendation of the Budget Committee, \$325,000 has been added to the Sheriff's Detention Center budget under salaries and related 3 lines. This will enable the Sheriff to increase salaries for detention officers. You will recall this is in addition to the \$350,000 added to this current year's budget for salary increases in the Sheriff's office, which is maintained in this budget and inclusive of the 2% COLA."

This is sad and an insult to the men and women who put their lives on the line. Why?

The Sheriff Office house Federal Inmates which I have heard bring in over a million dollars a year for the Sheriff Office. So where does that money go? It would be interesting to see where it went if it went directly to the Sheriff Office budget where they could allocate it within the office.

So why is the County Manager allowed to use the revenue from the Federal Inmates elsewhere but then again I stand to be corrected.

I also have heard that the Sheriff Office can house even more Federal Inmates which would bring in more income but why should they?

Edgecombe County Sheriff Office salary do not come close to what surrounding counties are receiving. At some point and time these men and women in the Sheriff Office are going to start going to where they can make more money. It is a damn shame that some have to work part-time when the part-time work should be optional and not a necessity. Part-time work ought to be there for retired law enforcement that want to work for whatever reason.

It is time that the Sheriff Office receive a salary increase that reflect other counties.

Pay our Edgecombe County Sheriff Office because these men and women deserve it as they put their lives on the line daily to protect your county manager, county commissioners and the citizens of Edgecombe County.

Sheriff Clee Atkinson stated that in a time in society where law enforcement officers are going to shootings, they are going to overdoses and they are doing things that nobody across America would want to do. He stated that it is probably one of the most hated professions in America right now. He stated that one of the most hateful statements that he has had happen to him since the pandemic, since police brutalities, and police assassination was when his son came to him and asked him when was he going to let it go. He stated after over

twenty years of doing something that he loves it hurt him. He was asked why was he fighting for people and he told him that he was fighting for people who cannot speak for themselves. He stated that there are people in the room making 70 and 80 and 90 thousands of dollars, if not more and we have people working in his facility that can barely put a meal on their plate. Sheriff Atkinson stated that he was not asking for a lot, just a little. His employees are working two of the toughest jobs in any county and others will say they could not do the job that they do. He stated that he is the type who is willing to take his salary and give it to a deputy so that they can survive, because he knows God will take care of him. Sheriff stated that he is tired and asked that the Board just trust him. He stated that he is down to zero cars at the Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office. He stated that he knew the plan would not work, but he stood up here anyway. He stated that he has never been a commissioner, but has been a professional law enforcement officer a long time and he knows how to do law enforcement work and he knew that plan was not going to work so right now the stress is on him because he has zero spare cars. If they break down they are switching cars in and out and cannot even get to the citizens. Sheriff Atkinson stated that he reviewed the budget and he is not satisfied with it at all. Federal inmates generate \$1.2 million to the Edgecombe County and he has a whole empty pod at Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office. He has the ability to give all the employees in the County a raise. He stated that he does not care what is done with that money just let him take care of his own. Just give him a little bit. The other pod that is empty in the Sheriff's Office is just sitting there. It's \$1.2 million in waiting. Give it to the other Edgecombe County employees and give them a raise and let's make the living in Edgecombe County better. What we have done so far has not worked, but we've got the chance to fix it. The proposed budget is looking at \$325,000, not \$728,000 and he is not satisfied with that because as a leader he has to make a change in the way we live. Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office is like his cake and he has have got to have a jail regardless, but the federal inmates are icing on the cake at \$1.2 million plus, with the ability to bring in \$2.4 million total. Sheriff Atkinson stated that he has already spoken with the US Marshal in Raleigh, in which he has a great partnership with them and they love the Edgecombe County detention facility, but there is no need for to continue the work day out with those federal men and women, so he is prepared on June 22nd to call the US Marshal's Office and have all those 40 federal inmates removed.

There being no further comments the public hearing was adjourned.

6. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT.

A. Karen Lachapelle, Health Director, to provide COVID-19 update.

Mrs. Lachapelle stated that as of June 1, 2021, reported to her by the DHHS Edgecombe County has 5,646 cases of COVID-19 and a total of 118 deaths. We

still have Optum Serve testing at Heritage Park in Princeville and at Pinetops behind Town Hall. You can still be tested at Freedom Hill, Vidant Multispecialty Clinic and OIC.

Mrs. Lachapelle provided COVID-19 case information relative to total cases, age groups, gender, race, hospitalizations, deaths (age, gender); number of vaccines given, sites participating in vaccination clinics. She stated that we have a decline in the number of vaccines they are giving daily at the Health Department. They have reduced the number of COVID Vaccine Clinics to Thursdays and Fridays, 9 am to 4 pm in both offices. They are getting ready to start their community outreach.

7. **BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW.**

REV. HINES MOVED TO RECESS REGULAR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING AND CONVENE AS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW. MRS. HARRIS SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

A. Mr. Wiggins called the meeting to order.

B. Scheduled appointments. None

C. Consideration of resolution finalizing final values.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

MR. WOOTEN MOVED TO ADJOURN AS BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW AND RECONVENE REGULAR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING. MR. WEBB SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

8. **PUBLIC PETITIONS.**

None.

9. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

A. **Approval of budget amendments.**

Mr. Evans provided additional information on some of the budget amendments.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the budget amendments as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. **Approval of calling for a public hearing on June 21, 2021 for consideration of Fire Tax increases for Macclesfield, South Edgecombe, Sharpsburg (Tri-County, Battleboro (Harrison), and Sharp Point fire departments.**

Mr. Evans stated that we received requests from five of our fire departments to increase their fire tax. In their request, each one outlined the need for the increase, which primarily involved the purchase of new equipment. He stated that we have reviewed the requests and determined that the equipment proposed is reasonable and necessary for the fire protection and response they provide. However, since this will increase the tax to citizens in each of these five districts, he recommended that the Board call for a public hearing for each district to be held at the June 21, 2021 meeting.

Rev. Hines moved to call for and hold a public hearing on June 21, 2021. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. **Approval of fireworks permits for Tarboro and Macclesfield.**

Mr. Evans stated that both the Town of Tarboro and the Town of Macclesfield have submitted applications for their July 4th fireworks display. NC General

Statute 14-4 requires authorization of the Board of Commissioners before issuance of the required permit by the Fire Marshall. The applicants have furnished the required documents including property certification and insurance.

Mrs. Harris moved to authorize the Fire Marshall to issue the required permits as requested. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of Memorandum of Agreement with USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Services.

Mr. Evans stated that the County has an ongoing partnership with USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to provide related services and programs to citizens. The agreement which established that relationship is due to be renewed. Mr. Evans presented the proposed Memorandum of Agreement. Per this agreement, the County will continue to provide county staff, currently two positions, office space and related support, and fiscal management of state and federal funds that flow through our office.

Mr. Evans introduced Scott Kiser, Soil and Water Director.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Memorandum of Agreement as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Approval of Edgecombe School Board surplus and property offer of .376 acres.

Mr. Evans stated that the Edgecombe County Board of Education has taken action to declare as surplus a parcel of .376 acres located on Draughn Road near Whitakers. This is a wooded lot with no structures with a tax value of \$7,000. State statute requires that the County be given the first right of refusal before disposing of the property. He recommended that the Board decline offer because the property would not meet any current need of the County.

Mrs. Powell moved to decline the offer as recommended. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of easement to Edgecombe Martin-EMC for service to Kingsboro Industrial Park.

Mr. Evans stated that Edgecombe Martin Electric Membership Corporation is in need of an easement along the soon to be named "Leonard Wiggins Parkway" at Kingsboro Industrial Park. This will allow them to construct and maintain a transmission line for electrical service into the park.

Rev. Hines moved to approve the easement as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

G. Approval of the Salary Plan for fiscal year 2022.

Mr. Evans stated that it is his responsibility to annually review the County's Compensation Plan and make recommendations for modifications. His review of the plan involves consideration of maintaining a competitive compensation structure while being mindful of what our budget can sustain. Mr. Evans stated that though our salaries need to be raised to be more competitive with comparable positions in both the public and private sector, our budget cannot withstand that at this time. Therefore, the proposed compensation plan includes no changes.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the Salary Plan for fiscal year 2022 as presented. Mr. Wiggins seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

H. Approval of Change Order No. 2 with Ralph Hodge Construction for Speed Sewer

Phase 2.

Mr. Evans presented for Board consideration change order no. 2 for the contract with Ralph Hodge Construction Company. The contract is for phase 2 of the extension of sewer in the vicinity of the Town of Speed. The details of the change order are described in the document presented in the agenda packet. The proposed change order adds \$6,804.70 for a total cost of \$1,225,514.70.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the change order as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

I. Approval of Resolution Designating Map Review Officer.

Mr. Evans stated that NC General Statutes requires the Board to designate by resolution staff who will serve as our mapping and land records Review Officer. Due to staff changes, this needs to be updated. He presented the resolution naming a review officer and alternates.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the resolution as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

J. Approval of contract to collect taxes for the Town of Macclesfield.

Mr. Evans stated that the Town of Macclesfield has requested that the County collect their property taxes. Tarasa Lewis, Tax Administrator, is in agreement to provide this service. As a note, the County already collect taxes for Conetoe, Leggett, Princeville, Sharpsburg, Speed, Whitakers, and Pinetops. This will be for a 2% collection fee.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the agreement as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

10. APPOINTMENTS.

A. Planning Board.

Mr. Boswell moved to re-appoint Ada Barnes-Morgan. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. Board of Adjustment.

Rev. Hines moved to re-appoint John Killebrew. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

11. PLANNING BOARD REPORT. *Received*****

A. Reappointment of Planning Board members.

B. Minutes of May 17, 2021 meeting.

12. AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the afterlists and releases as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

13. CONTRACTS FOR REVIEW/APPROVAL.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the contracts as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

14. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW. *Received*****

A. Water Services.

B. Financial Summary report.

15. MANAGER'S REPORT. *Received*****

A. Workforce Development Indicators.

B. Update on American Rescue Plan funds.

C. Sales Tax update.

D. Voting delegate for NCACC conference.

Mr. Wiggins moved to appoint Mrs. Harris. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion,

which carried by unanimous vote.

16. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.
None.

17. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.
None.

18. CLOSED SESSION.
Rev. Hines moved to go into closed session to discuss:
A. Economic Development. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)]
B. Legal Matter. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)]

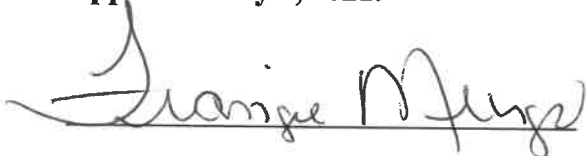
Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Rev. Hines moved to go out of closed session and resume the regular meeting. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

The Board had brief discussion regarding the budget.

19. MR. WOOTEN MOVED TO RECESS THE MEETING UNTIL JUNE 21, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M. REV. HINES SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved July 6, 2021.



Franje Mungo, Clerk to the Board