

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGEcombe COUNTY
JUNE 6, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE JONATHAN FELTON COMMISSIONERS ROOM
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

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

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

3. **PRAYER.**

Rev. Hines provided the prayer.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL.**

Mr. Boswell noted a correction in the May 2, 2022. In a statement he made under Commissioner's report, the correct work should be fiduciary not judiciary.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the minutes with the correction, Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. **Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizen comments relative to the Down East Home Consortium Annual Action Plan.**

Mr. Peters read the public notice as published.

Mr. Evans introduced Ms. Cornelia McGee, City of Rocky Mount Director of Community Development, who provided an overview of the plan.

Ms. McGee provided and update on:

- HOME award - \$455,813 from HUD.
- HOME eligible activities.
- 2022 Annual Action Plan.
- 2022 HOME activities.
- Public engagement timeline.

Ms. McGee answered questions from the Board.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comments. There being none, the public hearing was adjourned.

Mr. Webb moved to approve the Down East Home Consortium Annual Action Plan as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

2. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizen comments relative to the proposed fiscal year 2022-2023 Edgecombe County Budget.

Mr. Peters read the public notice as published.

Mr. Evans read his budget message:

Submitted herein is the Edgecombe County recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. 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 22-23 is 95 cents per \$100 value, which is no change from the current year. One cent generates approximately \$342,000. The County's proposed budget for FY 22-23 totals \$77,855,842, including enterprise funds (Water/Sewer and Solid Waste). The proposed budget is a decrease of \$2,074,150 or 2.6% from the original budget of the current year. The proposed budget includes a fund balance appropriation of \$4,841,975 from general fund. The current year's original fund balance appropriation was \$4,383,245.

The State requires that we maintain an amount equal to at least 8% of our general fund expenditures in unassigned fund balance. The proposed general fund budget is \$69,986,910, 8% of which is \$5,598,953. Therefore, the proposed fund balance appropriation to balance the FY-23 budget does not take us below the requirement.

KEY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Revenues

So far this year, our tax collection rate is 95.1%. Thanks to the hard work of our Tax Administrator and her staff, we ended FY-21 with a collection rate of 96.2%, which is the highest we've had in at least the last twenty years. Our property tax revenue projections are based on a total valuation of \$3,429,810,945, including all real property, personal property, public utilities, and motor vehicles. This is an increase of \$1,600,518 in value from last year.

The devastating fire at QVC did put a dent of just under \$1 million in our potential tax revenues for next year. The total tax value of the facility before the fire was \$124,591,160. Now the total value is \$22,641,506; a decline in value of \$101,949,654 (82%).

Our sales tax revenues are holding steady compared to the last two years, and much higher than our revenues in FY-19 and prior. I do project that the current year's sales tax collection will fall just under last year's. I am still conservatively budgeting projected revenues for sale tax in FY-23.

Personnel

A Cost of Living Adjustment of 2% is included in this budget at a cost of approximately \$386,000. I am pleased to share that we will not have an increase in our health insurance

premiums for next year. Being that we have done well in the last three years with insurance cost-to-budget, I am not including an increase in Health Insurance as I did the last two years.

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.

In order to reduce the amount of fund balance appropriated, we are including a vacancy allowance in our budget. Though not used by us before, this is a common budgeting practice. It allows us to leave all current positions budgeted while factoring in our expected lapsed salaries due to turnover. We have spread a \$2.5 million vacancy allowance over our largest departments: Sheriff, DSS, Health, and Emergency Services. We do need to keep in mind that we will not be able to move money from those salary lines by way of budget amendments throughout the year. We will monitor that closely.

As you will recall, we increased our minimum salaries to a \$10 per hour minimum a few years ago. However, at the time, we did not do the same for part-time staff. I recommend, and have included in this draft budget, the additional \$90,000 we estimate it will cost to raise salaries to a minimum of \$10 per hour for part-time staff. This primarily affects the 36 Site Attendants that work in Solid Waste. This also factors in a tiered approach so that there is some separation based on years of service.

Capital Outlay

This budget includes capital outlay expenditures for County operations of \$1,195,000, which is a \$272,290 increase from this year's original capital outlay budget. Of this, \$192,120 is for projects that will not be completed or delivered in the current year and rolled forward. Attached is a detailed list of proposed capital expenditures. Capital funding includes:

• Equipment	\$198,000
• Vehicles	\$307,000
• EMS Vehicles	\$175,000
• Building/grounds	\$465,000
• Set Aside for Animal Shelter Reserve	<u>\$50,000</u>
Total	\$1,195,000

Though it is included in debt service, I do want to point out here that \$250,000 is budgeted for both the final payment on the 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.

Solid Waste

The costs to operate the landfill continue to exceed the revenues generated. Without a tipping fee increase, we are projecting a need to transfer \$754,000 to Solid Waste. I recommend to increase tipping fees from \$61.5 to \$65 for MSW, and from \$46 to \$50 for C&D. That will help to close the gap by about \$100,000. This will put us among the highest in our region, with the exception of Rocky Mount (\$66 for MSW). Though we are very lean on our operations, we will continue to look for ways to cut costs.

Water & Sewer

We have been notified of at least a 3.5% rate increase from the Town of Tarboro and a possible increase from the City of Rocky Mount. We believe that our current rates are sufficient to cover this increase, and therefore recommend no change at this time. However, if the increases are more than expected, I will reconsider my recommendation.

Outside Agencies

The total requested by outside agencies is \$16,315,390, which is \$2,052,220 above what is allocated this year. We received a request from two new outside agencies this year. However, with our own budget constraints, I do not recommend funding any new agencies this coming fiscal year. The total I recommend for outside agency funding is \$14,406,038. This is an increase of \$142,868 for outside agencies.

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.

Three volunteer fire departments are requesting an increase in their fire tax. They are:

- Heartsease .08 to .12
- Leggett .085 to .09
- Fountain .085 to .09

I recommend we call for separate public hearings for citizens in those districts to have the opportunity to make their opinions known before acting on these increases.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

As you know, Edgecombe has been allocated \$9,997,833 in federal ARPA funds, half of which we have already received. The program permits counties to take a standard allowance of up to \$10 million as revenue replacement, which we have elected. This will allow greater flexibility of the use of the funds. In my proposed ARPA budget, we can strategically use funds to give some much-needed relief to our general fund, satisfy upcoming economic development obligations, address big-ticket, critical capital needs, provide a one-time, and much deserved bonus for our employees, and provide some direct assistance to our citizens.

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 22-23.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comment. There being none, the public hearing was adjourned.

Mr. Evans asked the Board to not vote of the budget at this meeting, but at a second meeting to be held on June 27, 2022. He asked the Board to take action on the proposed use of the ARPA funds.

Mrs. Powell moved to approve the proposed use of the ARPA funds as presented. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

6. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS.

A. Nyreke Peters, Lead for NC Fellow, presentation of certificates for Citizens Academy graduates.

Mr. Peters presented certificates to the following graduates that were present: Kathy Williams, Gloria Moseley, Virginia Wade, Katia Peters, Khadijah Peters

Teresa Stokes and Crystal Wilmes-Anderson
Graduate not present: Glenda Knight

B. Michelle Etheridge, Health Director, presented the COVID-19 update.

7. BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW.

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

A. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.

B. Scheduled appointments.

Mrs. Lewis provided an update on the appeal if Tarboro PropCo, LLC.

After the information provided Rev. Hines moved to approve the no change in the 2022 value on the appeal of Tarboro Propco., LLC. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Approval of resolution finalizing final values for 2022.

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

MRS. HARRIS 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.

Curmilus Dancy, P O Box 139, Pinetops, NC, 127 Midway Lane, Tarboro. Mr. Dancy thanked the Board for allowing him to serve on the Animal Control Board. Mr. Dancy stated that, regarding the school demerger, he has recorded all of the meetings and posted them on YouTube for anyone to see. He stated that the Board of Commissioners should announce where they stand so that people can be more informed. He stated that we need to get to the root of how it all began and where we are headed so that people will not be confused and people will know what is at stake before the public hearing.

9. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Approval of budget amendments.

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

B. Approval of the Conveyance of a Right of Way by Edgecombe Community College to the NC Department of Transportation.

Mr. Evans stated that NC DOT is planning a road widening project on Wilson Street and has approached Edgecombe Community College to purchase and for a right-of-way. The appraiser has completed his work and the Board of Trustees voted to sell the property. The Board of Commissioners must approve the Deed for Highway Right of Way.

Mrs. Harris moved to approve the Deed for Right of Way as presented. Mr. Webb seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Approval of calling for a public hearing regarding the consideration of a County Line Merger of Schools.

Mr. Evans stated that though there have been three community meetings held in Rocky Mount to gather citizen input on the possible county line school merger, he suggested that the Board hold its own public hearing at the July 5, 2022 meeting.

Mr. Boswell moved to call for and hold a public hearing at the July 5, 2022 meeting. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of calling for a public hearing on June 27, 2022 for consideration of Fire Tax increases for Leggett, Heartsease and Fountain Fire Departments.

Mr. Evans stated that received requests from three of our fire departments to increase their fire tax. In their request, each one outlined the need for the increase. He stated that the requests have been reviewed and determined that the justification to be reasonable for the fire protection and response they provide. However, since this will increase the tax to citizens in each of these districts, he recommended that the Board call for a public hearing for each district to be held at a meeting to be called for June 27, 2022 meeting.

Mr. Boswell moved to call for a public hearing regarding the proposed increase in Fire Tax for the Leggett Fire District from \$0.06 to \$0.09. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Bowell moved to call for a public hearing regarding the proposed increase in Fire Tax for the Heartsease Fire District from \$0.08 to \$0.12. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to call for a public hearing regarding the proposed increase in Fire Tax for the Fountain (Pintain) Fire District from \$0.085 to \$0.09. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Approval of the Salary Plan for fiscal year 2023.

Mr. Evans stated that it is the 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 while being mindful of what our budget can sustain. He stated that though he believes that 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 incudes no changes.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the 2022-2033 Compensation Plan as presented. Mr. Wiggins seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

F. Approval of fireworks permit for Town of Tarboro.

Mr. Evans stated that the Town of Tarboro has submitted an application 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 applicant has burnished the required documents including property certification and insurance.

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

G. Approval of request for the sale of service weapon to retiring Sergeant Brady Abrams.

Mr. Evans stated that NC Statute 20-187.2 allows the Board of Commissioners to award a retiring officer his/her service weapon. It specifically stated that you may do so at a price determined by you as the governing body. Sheriff Atkinson has requested that consideration be given for retiring Sergeant Brady Abrams.

To show the County's appreciation for their exemplary service, and to provide a memento to that service, Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve the transfer of the service weapon at a price of \$1 upon the retirement of Sergeant Brady Abrams.

Mr. Wooten moved to approve the sale of service weapon to retiring Sergeant Brady Abrams. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

H. Approval of voting delegate for the NACo Annual Conference and the NCACC Annual Conference.

Mr. Evans stated that the National Association of Counties will hold its Annual Conference on July 21, 24, 2022 and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners will hold its Annual Conference on August 11-13, 2022. Commissioner Harris plans to attend both conferences to represent the County. Therefore, he recommended that the Board take action to approve Commissioner Harris as the Voting Delegate for Edgecombe County for both of the 2022 Annual Conferences.

Rev. Hines moved to approve Commissioner Harris as the Voting Delegate for both conferences. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

I. Approval of updated Water and Sewer Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Evans presented to the Board for consideration the Water and Sewer Department's Capital Improvements Plan. This provides a way to plan for the phased build-out of needed infrastructure in the County as well as capital purchases needed to maintain our existing system. This plan lists desired projects, planned capital purchases, estimated costs, and the number of citizens potentially benefitting from the project.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the Water and Sewer Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

J. Approval of declaring phones as surplus property.

Mr. Evans presented for the Board's consideration and approval a list of items that have been declared surplus by the Information Technology Department.

- 11 Nortel M3904 analog phones (unopened and still in the box)
- 295 Nortel M3903 and other various phones.

Mr. Evans recommended that the Board approve these items as surplus and authorize the disposal by listing them on GovDeals, an internet auction service in which the County participates.

Mr. Boswell moved to declare the items as surplus and to authorize disposal by listing on GovDeals. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

10. APPOINTMENTS:

A. Town of Princeville Planning Board for ETJ.

Rev. Hines moved to appoint Antwan Brown. Mrs. Harris seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

B. Edgecombe County Planning Board.

None.

C. Edgecombe County Board of Adjustment.

Mr. Boswell moved to appoint Bonnie Salmon, Michael Edmondson and Cecil Calhoun. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Edgecombe Community College Board of Trustees.

Mrs. Powell moved to reappoint Gloria Wiggins-Hicks. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

E. Town of Sharpsburg Planning Board.

Mr. Webb moved to reappoint Edward Taylor. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

11. 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.

12. APPROVAL AND/OR REVIEW OF CONTRACTS.

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

13. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.*Received*****

A. Water and Sewer update.

B. Monthly Financial Summary.

14. MANAGER'S REPORT.*Received*****

A. Overview of Community Voice Initiative.

Nyreke Peters, Lead for NC Fellow, provided a power point presentation.

B. Workforce Development indicators.

15. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

16. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

17. 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. Personnel. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)]

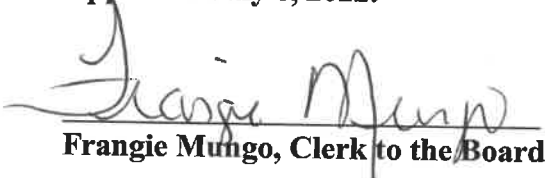
Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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

Mr. Norris Tolson, Carolinas Gateway, came forth to request additional funding for fiscal year 2023.

18. REV. HINES MOVED TO RECESS THE MEETING UNTIL JUNE 27, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M. MR. BOSWELL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved July 6, 2022.


Frangie Mungo, Clerk to the Board