

MINUTES
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF EDGECOMBE COUNTY
JUNE 1, 2020 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, Mrs. Evelyn Powell, Mr. Ralph Webb, Mrs. Viola Harris, Mr. Donald Boswell and Mr. William Wooten.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

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

With the consensus of the Board the agenda was revised to include the convening of the Board of Equalization and Review following the public hearings.

2. SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS.

Mr. William Johnson, Assistant County Manager, 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 4, 2020 meeting. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS.

1. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to receive citizen comments and questions relative to the proposed fiscal year 2020-2021 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) 2020-2021. The Budget is balanced in its entirety, as required by the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. In drafting this budget William Johnson, Assistant County Manager, Katherine Walters, Finance Director, and I worked with all of our department heads and met with our major, outside agencies. We 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;*
- *providing a reasonable cost of living increase;*
- *preparing for the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and*
- *avoiding budget decisions that will violate our financial policies.*

Budget Overview

The proposed ad valorem tax rate for the FY 20-21 is 95 cents per \$100 value, which is no change from the current year. One cent generates approximately \$350,000. The County's proposed budget for FY20-21 totals \$78,536,190, including enterprise funds (Water/Sewer and Solid Waste); \$60,636,262 General Operation Budget. The proposed budget is an

increase of \$1,705,314 or 2.2% from the original budget of the current year. The proposed budget includes a fund balance appropriation of \$8,461,287 from general fund. The current year's original fund balance appropriation was \$6,915,371.

The main contributors to the budget increase are: the Nash-Rocky Mount Schools "gap" fund for current expense (\$407,000) we are taking over from the City of Rocky Mount per the state legislation; an increase in our share of capital for Nash-Rocky Mount Schools which includes proposed projects and debt service (\$302,628); increased appropriation to Edgcombe Rescue Squad (\$300,000); the proposed cost of living increase (\$680,000); and the proposed increase to the health insurance reserve (\$225,000).

KEY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Revenues

We anticipate some negative impact on two of our primary revenue streams, property tax and sales tax, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect our tax collection rate to end this year below the collection rate from last fiscal year (94% compared to 95.82%). Though sales tax revenues have been trending upward for the last three years, and well above our conservative budget estimates, we do anticipate some contraction due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic response. Sales tax receipts for April and May will prove more useful in estimating the impact once those are received. However, what we have collected so far this fiscal year (\$7,859,316) is well above the \$6,405,000 we budgeted. The proposed budget for FY-21 is slightly above the current year, but will be still below what we will likely receive, even with decreases due to the pandemic.

Personnel

A Cost of Living Adjustment of 2% is included in this budget. The cost of this COLA is approximately \$680,000, 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 (\$225,000).

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. However, our screenings will be delayed due to COVID-19. As we can safely complete the health screenings, they will be scheduled. 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.*

Capital Outlay

This budget includes capital outlay expenditures for County operations of \$534,000 which is down by \$446,201 from this year's original capital outlay budget. However, there are a number of items needed which total \$451,000, that I recommend we reconsider in July once we have gotten a better picture of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our budget.

Solid Waste

We received notice that the fee for our contract to haul municipal solid waste (MSW) to the regional landfill, which includes the tipping fee, is going up from \$41.98 per ton to \$43.26. With that in mind, and in an effort to keep up with this cost of operating our solid waste enterprise, I recommend increases in our rates as shown in the attached document.

Water & Sewer

At this time, we have not received notification of a rate increase from our suppliers, Rocky Mount and Tarboro. However, we do need to keep up with the increasing costs to operate and maintain our water and sewer system. Therefore, I recommend to increase the availability fee by \$0.50 and the water usage rates by \$0.50 as shown in the attached document.

Outside Agencies

The total requested by outside agencies is \$17,568,845, which is \$3,019,118 above what is allocated this current year. We received a request for one new outside agency 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 \$15,612,967. This is an increase of \$1,063,200 for four 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. The only exception is with the following.

- *Edgecombe Community College requested \$50,000 in capital funding for critical repairs to HVAC units. As a note, we did not appropriate any capital funds for the Community College in the current year's budget.*
- *In the current year, we funded the Town of Tarboro \$2,500 for Special Olympics for six months of funding. In the proposed budget, I have included \$5,000 for a full year's funding to support the Special Olympics.*

There is one volunteer fire department requesting an increase in their fire tax. Heartsease Fire Department is requesting to increase the fire tax rate for their district from \$0.08 to \$0.10. I do not see sufficient justification to increase their fire tax at this point, so I do not recommend the increase. However, members of the fire department will have the opportunity to make their appeal directly to you at this budget hearing if they chose to.

Conclusion

In preparing this budget, I feel that we have met our aforementioned goals. 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 support.

I respectfully submit this proposed budget for Fiscal Year 20-21. I recommend that you hear comments submitted by the public and table this matter until you reconvene on June 22, 2020 at 10:00 AM.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comments.

In light of the State of Emergency and in consideration of the recommendations government and public health officials to limit public gatherings, Edgecombe County's Board of Commissioners meeting was closed to the public and the public was encouraged to submit any public comments via email to publiccomments@edgecombeco.com or submitted by mail addressed to Eric Evans, County Manager. The public was notified that all public comments submitted would be read at the meeting. The public was also encouraged to listen to the meeting by calling the published number. No public comments were submitted.

Mr. Evans stated that because this meeting is officially closed to the public for public safety, only allowing Board of Commissioners, press, select staff and others who are on the agenda, the Governor's executive order does include a waiver for local governments that we can exceed the ten people gathering. He stated that in the notice regarding the budget tonight we included the opportunity for anyone who had comments specific to the budget could have submitted that in writing by Sunday at 5:00 p.m. and we did not receive any.

Mr. Wiggins asked for any discussion from the Board.

Mr. Wooten stated that he felt it imperative that we look to raise the salaries of detention center officers. The information provided is that there are 56 positions in the detention center, plus an additional six positions in detention support staff for a total of \$366,000. He asked the Board to consider an additional \$275,000 increase above what the budget calls for that will be earmarked just for the detention center staff and support staff, which will affect 63 people.

Mrs. Harris stated that if we are going to do that for the detention center, she recommends that we also do it for the deputies. They are on the frontline and essential.

Mr. Wooten stated that he was trying not to dilute the amount of money. He is trying to make the biggest impact in the area of the Sheriff's department that has the highest turnover with some of the lowest starting wages. He stated that he agrees with Mrs. Harris but we have to take it step by step.

Mr. Wiggins asked for feedback from other Commissioners, because the County Manager will need some direction in preparation of the final document.

Mr. Boswell stated that since there are different feelings about the issue and we have until June 22nd. He stated that he would hate to see the Board make a decision tonight on anything without having the budget committee meet to discuss it prior to that.

After discussion it was the consensus of the Board to consider a \$350,000 increase in addition to the 2% to be earmarked for the salary increases for the Sheriff's department to be divided between the six classifications and to give that direction to Mr. Evans to have it in the budget at the next meeting.

Mr. Boswell moved to adjourn the public hearing and set the date of June 22, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. to approve the budget. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

2. Mr. Wiggins called a public hearing to order to citizen comments and questions relative to a rezoning request from Brandon Deal to change the zoning classification of property located at 4297 NC 122 South in Township No. 10. The property is zoned AR-30 (Rural Residential – 30,000sq. ft.) and is requested to change to M-2 (General Industrial District).

Mr. Peters read the notice as published.

Mr. Evans stated that this does come with a favorable recommendation from the Planning Board. He stated that no public comments were received for this. He noted that the Planning Board did receive one letter from an adjoining property owner who did oppose this and the letter expressed concerns about a business being developed in a residential area.

Mr. Wiggins called for public comments.

In light of the State of Emergency and in consideration of the recommendations government and public health officials to limit public gatherings, Edgecombe County's Board of Commissioners meeting was closed to the public and the public was encouraged to submit any public comments via email to publiccomments@edgecombeco.com or submitted by mail addressed to Eric Evans, County Manager. The public was notified that all public comments submitted would be read at the meeting. The public was also encouraged to listen to the meeting by calling the published number.

No public comments were submitted.

The public hearing was adjourned.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the rezoning request as recommended by the Planning Board. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

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

Mr. Wiggins called the meeting to order.

Mrs. Tarasa Lewis, Tax Administrator, came forth:

Scheduled Appointments: Ms. Martha Johnson

2019 Value	2020 Value	Property Description
\$124,899	\$145,821	95 Rollinwood Drive

Appellant's basis for appeal was prior errors in tax assessments, property values are not in line with surrounding properties, SSA income is insufficient to pay this amount of taxes, the county and fire rate assessment process is dissimilatory. Assessment staff had examined this property and determined it was valued in accordance to our schedule of values but we also noticed that we incorrectly removed the unfinished attic back in 2013 so this correction will be made which will cause an increase of value by \$6,142. The main reason for the increase for 2020 was due to the appellant adding a 280 sq ft sunroom with a 440 sq ft carport attached at an estimated cost of \$26,740. Appellant also provided not certified opinion of value. Comps of surrounding property that were provided, were reviewed but none were equitable to the subject property.

Recommendation: Accept the new value of \$151,963 as the 2020 Taxable Real Value

Ms. Martha Johnson addressed the Board stating that property value has changed by \$44,725. Prior errors in tax assessments property values are not in line with surrounding properties. She stated that her SSA income cannot support the \$1600 yearly payment. She stated that the rate assessment process is discriminatory and the fire tax rate discriminatory. She presented tax assessment comparisons of several commissioners.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the recommendation of the Assessor's Office to accept the new value of \$151,963 as the 2020 Taxable Real Value. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mrs. Harris moved to adopt the Finalize Final Values resolution as presented. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

MR. WOOTEN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW. REV. HINES SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

6. SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT.

A. Carol Allen-White, Clerk of Court, Judge Walter Godwin, and Judge Wayne

Boyette, Judge John Britt and Judge Lamont Wiggins regarding a request for improvements at the courthouse.

Judge Wiggins stated that he along with the Honorable Carol Allen-White addressed the Board at their budget retreat and indicated that they would be coming back and would be asking the Board to address some specific concerns and would be asking for a specific budget request. Pre-pandemic they were looking to come to the Board with a request in excess of \$250,000 plus. They had gone through the process of getting estimates for work in which they desired to have been done. Post pandemic, they understand that there is going to be unforeseen and un-forecasted budgetary impacts and they have adjusted their budget request accordingly. A presented a series of priorities and a budget request of \$100,000.

After discussion from the Board Mr. Evans responded to and answered questions regarding potential COVID-19 CARES Act funding eligible uses for some of the items listed for the Courthouse.

The judges and Mrs. Allen-White came forth to speak on the importance of the budget request.

B. Ginell Rogers, Executive Director/CEO of NEED, Inc. to present application for CARES Act funding.

Mr. Evans stated that NEED, Inc has the opportunity to receive federal funding through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. He presented their application for funding including the budget. NEED, Inc. is required to distribute a copy of the plan to the Board prior to its submission.

Mr. Evans stated that Ms. Rogers was available via phone to answer questions.

Mrs. Harris moved to accept the application and funding as presented. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

C. Sheriff Clee Atkinson addressed the Board.

Sheriff Atkinson stated that it is time to move forward, baby steps are not enough. He stated that last night he called all 57 of his deputies in, those on vacation, those who had the day off, to protect the citizens. He stated that with the state of America right now he has to protect the citizens of Edgecombe County and every building in the County. He stated that the only thing his deputies had were 1965 helmets. He stated that he had this conversation three years ago regarding riot gear. He knew this day would come, they are not equipped. Sheriff Atkinson stated that if they cannot get what they need they cannot protect all the buildings.

After discussion from the Board Mr. Wooten moved to approve adding \$20,000 to the Sheriff's budget for riot equipment. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

7. PUBLIC PETITIONS.

In light of the State of Emergency and in consideration of the recommendations government and public health officials to limit public gatherings, Edgecombe County's Board of Commissioners meeting was closed to the public and the public was encouraged to submit any public petitions via email to publiccomments@edgecombeco.com or submitted by mail addressed to Eric Evans, County Manager. The public was notified that all public comments submitted would be read at the meeting. The public was also encouraged to listen to the meeting by calling the published number.

The following public petition was submitted via email and read by Mr. Evans:

DATE: May 29, 2020

TO: Edgecombe County Manager, School Board and County Commissioners

FROM: C. B. Daughtridge (Former Edgecombe County Commissioner (Republican))

SUBJECT: Gap Funding, Capital Expenditure in Nash County and problems with the route it appears the commissioners have chosen by budgeting Four Hundred Thousand (\$400,000) for the Edgecombe — Rocky Mount school students.

Senate Bill 382 was passed in July 2016 and now budgeting \$400,000 is the first tangible action I have seen related to Senate Bill 382 which has mandated action by the Fall of 2020.

Math involved in commissioners' route (close estimate)

- 1) Pay Nash County School System \$256 for 1670 Edgecombe County students to attend Nash-Rocky Mount School System = \$427,500;
- 2) As commissioners you probably will not/would not pay the \$256 for the Edgecombe County student going to Nash-Rocky Mount School System without paying the same amount on the 6200 Edgecombe County students to be educated here in the Edgecombe County School System. Also add the 600 Edgecombe County school students being educated in charter schools. Therefore, multiply 6800 Edgecombe County school students by the same \$256 to your budget and the number is an additional \$1,740,850. If Step #2 is not included in your budget then I fear you might be calling me to help prevent lawsuits like you did in 1999 when the Planning Board was in trouble at which time I was asked to serve on that board. If you don't fund all Edgecombe County school students "equally" then you are asking for trouble. Can we afford the cost?
- 3) Capital expenditures are not as easy to defend the annual cost; however, Edgecombe County will have to pay its 11% share to Nash County on capital maintenance and capital improvements and even on the \$20,000,000 (Twenty Million) Nash County school scheduled to be constructed in Red Oak next year. Let's put a conservative dollar amount on annual capital improvements and estimate the mean average will be \$2,000,000 (Two Million).

THEREFORE, THE ACCUMULATIVE OUT OF BUDGET ANNUAL COST IS OVER \$4,000,000 (FOUR MILLION DOLLARS).

LET'S LOOK AT SOME ALTERNATE ROUTES.....

- a) Have a referendum and allow the residents of Edgecombe County living in the City of Rocky Mount to vote on "placing all of Edgecombe County currently located within Rocky Mount city limits into Nash County". Therefore, all school students in the "new" Nash County would be educated and paid for by Nash County. Personally, I do not know what the vote would be; however, if it was affirmative, it would solve lots of political problems. But perhaps, we need to look at Plan b.
- b) Edgecombe County School District be at the county lines and Edgecombe County provide schools and funding for their public school students. Mathematically, you add up the "Gap Funding" - \$427,500, "the not to be sued funding"- \$1,740,850, " the annual capital funding to Nash County "\$2,000,000 (Two Million) along with the additional annual state and Federal funding for the 1670 students now attending school in Nash County - \$6,500,000 (Six Million Five Hundred Thousand).

This amounts to over \$10,500,000 (Ten Million Dollars) in savings or new funds to Edgecombe County annually.

I recommend we do nothing about the "Gap Funding"; therefore, go in default of State Bill 382, save the \$2,000,000 (Two Million Dollars) it is really going to cost to level up on Edgecombe County School Students, save the future \$2,000,000 (Two Million Dollars) next year's capital payment to Nash County, take our students back in Fall of 2021 along with the \$6,500,000 (Six Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars) of state and federal funding.

Thank you for your listening/reading time and through everyone's input, may the right route be taken on this very important issue for Edgecombe County.

8. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Approval of budget amendments.

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

B. Approval of revision to FY-20 JCPC Funding Plan.

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

C. Approval of update to ADA Grievance Procedure.

Mr. Webb moved to approve the update to the ADA Grievance Procedure as presented. Mr. Boswell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of application from Edgecombe Schools for Public Schools Capital Fund.

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

E. Approval of contract to collect taxes for the Town of Pinetops.

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

F. Approval contract amendment for H. G. Reynolds.

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

G. Approval of a permit for fireworks display in the Town of Tarboro.

Mr. Boswell moved to approve the fireworks display as presented. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

H. Approval of an amendment to the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

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

I. Approval of Utility Payment Plan Terms and Agreement.

Mr. Evans stated that because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Roy Cooper signed Executive Order 104 on March 31, 2020. Among other things, it prohibits utility shut-offs, late fees and reconnection fees for a period of sixty days. It also requires that customers be provided the opportunity to make reasonable payment arrangements over at least a 6-month period.

After discussion on the agreement Mrs. Powell moved to approve the contract with the addition of wording stating that if the full amount of the debt covered by Executive Order 124 is not satisfied on the final day of the six month period, services will be subject to disconnect on the next business day. Rev. Hines seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

9. AFTERLISTS AND RELEASES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

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

10. CONTRACTS FOR REVIEW/APPROVAL.

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

11. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS FOR REVIEW.***Received***

- A. Water Services.
- B. Financial Summary report.
- C. Hurricane recovery update.

12. MANAGER'S REPORT. ***Received***

- A. Update on grant application from CloudWyze for broadband expansion.
- B. 2020 Census update.
- C. Workforce Development Indicators.
- D. COVID-19 update.
- E. Letter from NC Conference of the United Methodist Church.

13. COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

None.

14. ATTORNEY'S REPORT.

None.

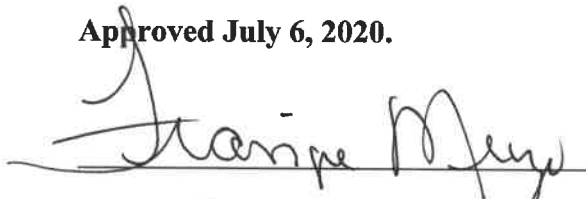
15. CLOSED SESSION.

Mr. Wooten moved to go into closed session to discuss economic development, [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)] and personnel. [N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(6)]. Mrs. Powell seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boswell moved to go out of closed session. Mr. Wooten seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

16. MR. BOSWELL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. MRS. POWELL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Approved July 6, 2020.



Frankie Mungo, Clerk to the Board