

MINUTES

LENOIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 02, 2015

The Lenoir County Board of Commissioners met in open session at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, February 02, 2015, in the Board of Commissioners' Main Meeting Room in the Lenoir County Courthouse at 130 S. Queen St., Kinston, NC.

Members present: Chairman Craig Hill, Vice-Chairman Jackie Brown and Commissioners, Roland Best, Mac Daughety, Reuben Davis Linda Rouse Sutton, and Eric Rouse.

Members Absent: None

Also present were: Michael W. Jarman, County Manager, Tommy Hollowell, Assistant County Manager, Martha Martin, Finance Officer, Vickie F. King, Clerk to the Board, Robert W. Griffin, County Attorney, members of the general public and news media.

Chairman Hill called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. Ms. Brown offered the Invocation and Mr. Davis led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

None

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of Minutes: Regular Board Meeting: January 20, 2015.
2. Budget Ordinance Amendment: General Fund: Non-Departmental: \$155.00. Increase.
3. Resolution Approving the Releases and Refunds to the Individuals Listed Herein.

Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS/RESOLUTIONS:

Item No. 4 was a Budget Ordinance Amendment: Federally Seized Property: Sheriff Federally Seized Property: \$19,500.00. Increase. Sheriff Ingram stated, this budget amendment is to appropriate funds from the Federally Seized Property Fund. On January 5, 2015, the commissioners approved the renewal of the CodeRed System, and on January 20, 2015, the commissioners approved the purchase of L3 in car cameras with JAG funds.

This money is coming from the fund balance of the Federally Seized Property Fund. Upon a motion by Mr. Daughety and a second by Ms. Brown, Item No. 4 was unanimously approved.

Item No. 5 was a Budget Ordinance Amendment: General Fund: Various: \$267,232.00. Increase. Martha Martin, Finance Director, stated, this is our midyear budget amendment where we go in and try to adjust the revenue and expenditure lines to more accurately reflect the actual expenditures and revenues. Upon a motion by Mr. Davis and a second by Mr. Best, Item No. 5 was unanimously approved.

Item No. 6 was a Resolution supporting North Carolina's Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) Program. Mark Pope, Economic Development Director, stated, the historical tax credit had a sunset of December 2014, and a push is on to reinstate those tax credits. In the Resolution, I have named some of the projects that we currently have going on like the Mitchell Town Project, Ginger 108, and the Boiler Room. These are just some of the buildings and facilities that have been renovated from citizens on the private side. Without the tax credits, we probably would not have the buildings back to where they are, functioning and actually producing income for our community. Projects like the CSS Museum are the type of projects that Economic Development would like to see back in the forefront. We want our folks to be able to take advantage of the tax credits, and keep revitalizing Lenoir County and communities in Eastern North Carolina. So it's very important that we put those credits back in place. As we move forward, we want to make sure we send these messages to our legislators, so they understand the importance of the tax credits and realize the HPTC programs are a worthy leveraging tool to stimulate a specific challenged area of our economy. Mr. Pope read the Resolution to the Board. Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 6 was unanimously approved.

Item No. 7 was a Resolution to approve a lease purchase agreement with Motorola Solutions for an L2 P25 Core in the amount of \$614,283.00. Roger Dail, EMS Director, stated, for the past two years, Lenoir and Jones County officials have been discussing and implementing a merger of the Jones County E-911 Center with the Lenoir County E-911 Center. As part of the merger, an upgraded radio system is needed to enable and enhance communications with responders in both Lenoir and Jones Counties. We have been trying to partner with neighboring counties on the sharing of the radius core. There has been a lot of going back and forth. I think the best course for Lenoir/Jones would be a lease/purchase of a core. As of now, the construction of the project is done and the only thing left is this one additional piece. From our stand point, I think Lenoir and Jones County's best option is to do a lease/purchase. We would know the price every year and would know the cutoff point. There possibly could be some extra grant money available that I could put toward this, but I don't want to commit to that because I do not have all of my invoices at this time from the construction project. We have asked for an extension of the grant to try and buy time to allow us to communicate with Onslow County to see if the partnership to share their core would work. From a monetary stand point, the lease/purchase is our best option.

Mr. Rouse asked, how does this fall out budget wise?

Mr. Dail stated, it is not in the budget, but if the Board approves the resolution, the payment would start in the next fiscal year, so it doesn't impact this year's budget.

Mr. Rouse asked, are there any concessions in next year's budget that that would help offset this amount, or will it be a direct increase?

Mr. Dail stated, it would be a direct increase, but if you are asking me if I could save enough somewhere else to offset the \$122,000, I can't stand here and tell you yes, because I don't know. We have a one year warranty on the system from the time we sign off, so we won't have to start paying maintenance on anything until 2016-2017.

Mr. Daughety asked, what are the alternatives?

Mr. Jarman stated, basically we were very upfront when we started this process. We said it was a \$7.4 million grant and 911 fund balance and we would let you know when it went beyond that. This is a worst case scenario and all the Resolution is asking for is commitment of county funds, not from the grant or 911, because it's not eligible for that. The impact on the budget would be the \$122,000; although, the final invoices are not in. We hope to lower that amount, but we can't ask you to approve something based on hope. Roger still has invoices coming in and there appears to be some savings, as well as some county cost; however, we might reduce this amount by 50%, but we just don't know at this time. The bottom line is, Roger has built an extremely nice car, but it won't run until we put a battery in it.

Mr. Hill mentioned, this is additional equipment than what we would have had before, it's an upgrade, as well as an additional expense.

Mr. Daughety asked, what benefits will the upgrade provide that we don't have now?

Mr. Dail said, two things, now we are simulcasting. Before we did not have that capability, because the tower site at Central Avenue was outdated, and now we have gone in and replaced the old analog system with digital equipment. The second thing is, we can simulcast the Hugo site. So essentially the radio system at central talks to the radio system at Hugo, and this increases our coverage. The other thing we need to remember is the partnership with Jones County. About 15% of what we budget is what Jones County's portion will be.

Mr. Hill mentioned that if the county had not done all of this, we would have additional costs building our own backup center and upgrading the radios.

Mr. Dail stated, the total cost is about \$9.2 million, and if all Lenoir County has to put with it is \$122,000, that's not a bad deal.

Mr. Jarman stated, Roger has pushed hard to try to get the cost down by partnering with other counties, but the savings were not that substantial, and having our own Core is just much better. Approving this Resolution will allow Roger to get started.

Mr. Rouse asked how is Lenoir County encumbering funds from Jones County?

Mr. Jarman stated, when the county went into this, we knew there would be costs to get it accomplished. We worked with Jones County and looked at the total cost to operate this system. Jones County agreed that their portion at the end of the day was 15% of the operating costs for each year. So each year, when we do our budget, if somebody was to raise the costs on us, Jones County will still pay 15%. They will approve their portion each year when they approve their budget. Since there was no way to determine a flat cost, the agreement had to be on a percentage of the actual cost.

Mr. Dail stated, two things to remember, we have an Interlocal agreement with Jones County and in the stipulations of the grant, Lenoir County is the owner of everything and everything is in our name.

Mr. Jarman stated, the bottom line is, if Jones County decided they did not want to participate, based on the agreement, they would owe the county money for part of the system. Plus, in all honesty, for communications to have an system updated of this quality for such a small amount of county funding is a win win situation.

Upon a motion by Ms. Sutton and a second by Ms. Brown, Item No. 7 was unanimously approved.

Item No. 8 was a Resolution approving appointments of citizens to boards, commissions, etc. Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, Item No. 8, was unanimously approved for Mr. Samuel Kornegay's appointment to the Lenoir County Transit Board. No action was taken for Mr. Clifton James Miller's appointment to the Lenoir County Board of Health, since this is the first appearance for him.

CURRENT VACANCIES: Lenoir County Health Board – (1) Optometrist, (1) Transit.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. John Nix addressed the Board. Instead of the public comments being at the end, could they be at the beginning? There are times when I look at the agenda a day or two prior to the meeting and if I see something I would like to comment about prior to the Board taking a vote, this would give me an opportunity. I know in the past, I had to ask for permission to speak ahead of time, so I am wondering if there is a formal way to introduce that into the agenda?

Mr. Hill stated, the Board has a place at the beginning for public information, and I would assume, that would be the place where you would sign up ahead of time to speak.

Mr. Jarman stated, anyone who wishes to be placed on the agenda would need to submit the information by Tuesday Noon, the week prior to the meeting in order for it to be on the agenda. This is scheduled at the beginning of the agenda.

Mr. Nix said I would prefer it be different, because my comments might be able to influence the way the Board might perceive or look at a decision they are making and there might be a group of people that might want to come in and talk as well. The conversation might influence the vote and the way the Board thinks, or table a vote until the public has more information.

Mr. Hill said that is normally done through phone calls and talking with individual commissioners. We try to do it as open as we possibly can and I don't see that moving the public into that piece would help facilitate the work the Board is trying to accomplish.

Mr. Nix asked when is the agenda published for the public viewing?

Mr. Hill answered items are due on Tuesday and we try to get it out on Thursday. We have had phone calls and emails regarding hot items out there and I feel that is the appropriate way to do that. I don't see the advantage to either side of doing what you are proposing. It's a very personal situation for you to talk to myself or any member of the Board, but to come in at that point and address the items that are currently on the agenda, I don't see that being a situation that would help the Board facilitate their work here. This is a business meeting, a meeting for the public, and if it was a meeting of the public, all we would do is hear people. There is business we have to take care of. I am open to hear from the public and I am open to receive emails. I always respond like all of the other members of the Board.

Mr. Nix stated, the City Council does it that way with a time limit, and if the public gets out of hand, they are asked to sit down or to leave.

Ms. Sutton mentioned to Mr. Nix, it is much better for me to talk to a person one on one. If you come and make a presentation before we get ready to vote on something and I hear something you say and I think there is some merit to it, I don't have any time to do any research. As with anything else that we might have on the agenda, I am not going to take it at face value, I'm going to research it and talk to somebody before I make a decision.

Mr. Daughety stated, to reinforce what Ms. Sutton said, we as commissioners requested amongst ourselves that we not throw items up on the day of the meeting, simply because we did not have time to research. There was an issue about two or three years ago and we unanimously agreed as commissioners that we did not like to vote on something that we did not have the opportunity to investigate and do research on. So if someone was to show up with an opinion or some information, it would be very hard to vote one way or the other or consider that information, without having done some type of research. You have a lot of good ideas and we have changed our meeting times, which was a good idea for the evening meeting, and I applaud you for that suggestion, but sometimes it's just not workable.

Mr. Rouse asked, didn't the Board used to have public comments at the front?

Mr. Jarman stated, in regards to the whole group of items, we moved it to the back so the commissioners could have time to focus on the business of the meeting and receive updates and comments at the end. It is a decision of the Board, but I would say this is a business meeting and there will be certain meetings that you hold public hearings because you have to, and there may be a time because of the sensitivity of an issue that you may wish to schedule some type of town hall meeting where you go back and forth, but I don't know if you would want to set up an environment like that for every meeting. I think you are going to have to keep the business perspective of it.

Mr. Best asked Mr. Nix if there had ever been problems with him trying to get information or speak to the commissioners, since you want to alter the way we are doing public comments?

Mr. Nix said no, I just didn't realize the agenda came out on Thursdays, and my question was, how can I get information to the Board regarding an agenda item if it doesn't come out until Thursday. You said I had to put it in writing by Tuesday to be able to speak on Monday.

Mr. Jarman stated, the commissioners have made themselves available, so you can talk to them if you see something on the agenda, but it appears you are asking for something like a public forum to get out your opinion out there on items. You have to realize, they are the elected board, so I would think you would need to call them.

Ms. Sutton mentioned, that is where the relationship with your commissioners is built. If you are working with your commissioner, call him on Thursday, ask what's on the agenda, and then if you want to present something, you can always present it through him.

Mr. Hill stated, the Board has really been open and if there is something controversial, we can adapt. Our mode of operation is giving the citizens a chance to speak on two different occasions. We have been very open to take questions prior to the meetings and open not to just local, but State and National influences as well. We have responded accordingly. I don't want to damage the ability to do the business of the people.

Item No. 9 was items from the County Manager. Mike Jarman, County Manager, stated, the NCACC is looking for some regional input and are meeting in Duplin County on March the 6th. The meeting is free of charge, but they requested registration for meal purposes. Also, April 9th, Onslow County will be hosting the District Meeting and they will share what the association is working on for the next year.

It is always good when a Department can receive positive recognition. EMS received a letter from Don Crawford, Fire and Rescue/Code Enforcement with the City of Kinston Department of Public Safety, expressing his thanks to Roger and his staff for their assistance on a recent missing person incident.

Mr. Jarman stated, they are a great support unit to us at all times, and if you look at our EMS staff, City Police, Fire Department and the Sheriff's Office, they work very well together to take care of our citizens. It was nice to receive a letter like this.

Mr. Rouse mentioned, in trying to represent the community, I would like for the Board to consider moving one of the at-large seats from the presidential election to the off year election. This way, every time someone goes to vote, they would have an at-large commissioner to vote for. I think it would be a fair move, because right now, both of the at-large seats come up at the same time with four year terms. I am proposing we just take one of the at-large seats and move it two years down the road, so every two years when you go to the voting booths, you are voting for an at-large commissioner. I think it would also help to get our voting increased.

Mr. Griffin stated, there is a legal issue he would like to bring up concerning that. The reason it is done this way is because it was part of the settlement reached with the US Justice Department when Lenoir County was sued for voting rights violations back in the 80's. The idea then, by having two at-large seats voted on at the same time would give the African American community a better shot at getting one of those two seats. If you had a single seat elected on one two year cycle and then a single seat elected on the other two year cycle, it would be more difficult for an African American candidate to get elected. So at the very least, if we did this, it would have to go to the Federal Courts to be approved, because the Federal Courts approved the original consent judgment. So anytime we make a change to our voting structure, it has to go back to them for approval.

Mr. Griffin stated, in the minutes from the last meeting, under Item No. 1 at the top of page 2 where we were discussing the transportation committee, I need to get this right since the question came back to me for some reason. Mr. Daughety raised a question about the length of the commissioner's term on the Transportation Board, and I would like clarification as well. Mr. Seay said the chairman and the at-large member would serve a four year term and would continue in that capacity until a successor was named. Because there was no longer any four year term, it was simply an appointment and that appointment would continue in place indefinitely until you appointed somebody else to that seat. The minutes should be changed to read as follows: on the third line delete the words serve a four year term and substitute the words, not serve a fix term: "Mr. Seay said the chairman and the at-large member would not serve a fixed term, but would continue in that capacity until a successor was named"

Upon a motion by Mr. Rouse and a second by Mr. Daughety the changes to the minutes were accepted.

Mr. Hill stated, the hospital has been so vital to Lenoir County and it is important for the public to hear this information from this setting. The Board of Directors of Lenoir Memorial Hospital voted unanimously to pursue a partnership through a management agreement with Novant Health. He shared the overview, the selection, proposed structure, and what will happen next. The management agreement should come sometime between April and May of 2015.

Ms. Brown stated, she has been asked to help mentor 6-8 grade girls from middle school and they met last week with approximately 15 girls, who were very interested in what goes on within the city. They expressed a desire to be a part of the teen summit that had been established by Mr. Suggs, a freshmen from Kinston High School. As an incentive, I put them to a challenge. Today at 5:00, they will bring their report cards and if the grades are sufficient, nothing below a C, they will receive a small momentum to encourage good working habits.

Ms. Sutton commended Ms. Brown for being recognized in last Sunday's paper as a community leader.

Upon a motion by Ms. Brown and a second by Ms. Sutton, a closed session was entered into at approximately 9:54 a.m. with the following cited: Number Four (4):

(4) To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the (public body).

Upon a motion by Mr. Daughety and a second by Mr. Best and unanimous approval, the Board moved out of closed session at approximately 10:00 a.m. The meeting re-convened in open session at approximately 10:02 a.m.

Mr. Hill stated, we are back in open session. The Board went into closed session to discuss Economic Development. No action was taken at this time.

Mr. Jarman stated, he had a conversation with the Lenoir County Public Schools regarding a joint meeting. We are looking at February 23rd or March 9th with the time being 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. The location will be determined later.

The Board agreed with the March 9th date.

With no further discussion Mr. Hill recessed the meeting at approximately 10:04 a.m. to resume as a Budget Work Session in the conference room of the Administration Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed By



Vickie F. King
Clerk to the Board



Michael W. Jarman
County Manager

LENOIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET PLANNING WORK SESSION
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM
FEBRUARY 02, 2015

The Lenoir County Board of Commissioners began their scheduled Budget Work Session on Monday, February 02, 2015, at 10:22 a.m., at the Administration Building Conference Room, 101 North Queen Street, Kinston, NC.

Members present included: Chairman Craig Hill; Vice Chairman; Jackie Brown and Commissioners; Roland Best, J. Mac Daughety, Reuben Davis, Eric Rouse and Linda Rouse Sutton.

Members Absent: None

Also present were: Michael W. Jarman, County Manager; Tommy Hollowell, Assistant County Manager; Martha Martin, Finance Officer; Vickie F. King, Clerk to the Board. Martha Bishop from TACC9 was also in attendance.

Mr. Hill welcomed the Board members to the Budget Work Session.

Mr. Jarman stated, we are seeking the Board's input and information for the upcoming FY 2015-2016 budget. The budget calendar is typical to what has been in the past and anytime during the presentation you would like further explanation, feel free to step in and interject. Some of the information will seem redundant, so I will not spend a lot of time discussing those items. The calendar is typical to what you have seen in the past and once we complete the calendar we will review the budget philosophy. After we have your input, we will mail the instructions to Department Managers tomorrow, as well as to outside agencies. The departments will have about six weeks to complete their requests and return them by March 13th. The outside agencies have until March 27th. These are tentative dates and this is a working plan, because there are some rules and statutes that change things, such as for Lenoir County Public Schools. Although we request theirs as soon as they can get it to us, by statute they have until May 15th. Looking at the schedule before you puts the budget in your hands by May 4, 2015, to allow you plenty of time to work with it. So if the school system waits until May 15th, it really shortens your time frame.

Ms. Sutton asked if there was any way to change the date for the work session scheduled for the 18th of May, because the LCC Board of Trustees' meeting is held on the same night, which is a conflict for her schedule.

Could we have the work session prior to our 5:00pm scheduled meeting? Mr. Jarman stated, it can be scheduled however the Board sees fit. If we have the regular meeting scheduled for 5:00pm, the Board can choose to meet at 3:00pm. Just remind us as we get closer to the time. It's probably a good idea to change the time of that meeting since there is a work session on that day. In times past, we have met earlier for that particular meeting, so it should not be a problem. Again, the calendar is tentative, so other dates can be added as necessary.

Mr. Jarman stated, the philosophy is the same the Board has been operating under for several years. We need you to read through it and approve to go with the same thing, or state the changes you would like to see. He reviewed the Financial/Budget Philosophy: view revenue decisions in each fiscal year from a five year perspective, we always try to look at the big picture and to do multiyear planning; use annual recurring revenues to pay for annual recurring expenditures; and rebuild unrestricted/unassigned general fund fund balance to a (20%) twenty percent minimum level of general fund expenditures. We are currently at 18.42% and we made some good headway this year in reaching that goal. We look to minimize future tax increases by reducing expenditures. We will continue to use pay as you go funding for capital projects. Employee pay should be based on market conditions, job standards, workload, and merit. We want to adequately fund education and use fees to offset costs of any operation. Enterprise funds will operate on their own revenues. We will continue to implement long-range planning.

Mr. Jarman asked the Board if they have any questions, need to alter, change or delete a philosophy at this point, or would they like to share any basic guiding principles to forward to the departments?

Mr. Rouse stated, I would like to see the fund balance goal lowered to 18.00% and stay there to allow some flexibility.

Ms. Sutton stated, I am hesitant to do anything until we see what will come out of the General Assembly.

Mr. Jarman mentioned, that savings has helped us through the recession and we have utilized it. Realizing 20% has been the goal of this Board and when we get opportunities like we did last year, having a good year on revenue and holding down expenditures, we did not change our tax rate, because we are trying to get to that goal.

Mr. Rouse asked, what percentage were we during last year?

Ms. Martin stated, at 14.66% and the reason it's so much higher this year is because of the duplication of four months of the motor vehicle tax collections and we received our money FEMA owed us from three years ago. The requirement the LGC puts out there is 8% as a minimum. It is really for emergencies. Also, our largest source of revenue comes in once a year. The fund balance helps us get through the lean revenue months.

Mr. Hollowell stated, the county has been blessed that we have not had a disaster or a hurricane in a couple of years. The FEMA money we just got was from Hurricane Irene in 2011.

Mr. Jarman mentioned, we don't want to raise taxes or reduce a service just to get there.

Ms. Brown asked, what would happen if Northwest school becomes K-6?

Mr. Jarman replied, when I get over into another page you can discuss the schools at that time.

The Board approved the Budget Philosophy as submitted.

Mr. Jarman mentioned the next few slides show what the Board has done in the past, and if something is not listed feel free to provide any information you would like to be included. The philosophy you just approved will be our guiding light, so anything you can give us up front can really help and save time in preparation of the budget. We need to understand the Board's priorities, like Ms. Brown just mentioned education. So if education is your priority, it is important for us to know. At this point you are telling us what your priorities are regardless of the funding level. Any changes we can make early on really helps us. Please keep that in mind as we review the goals, priority areas, and future plans and needs. Goals include: ensure that infrastructure exists for future and current needs; achieve a stable and strong financial position; achieve a high level of service in a friendly manner; achieve a well planned community using innovative planning approaches; provide educational and economic opportunities for all citizens; and, provide for safe and healthy communities. We will look at how we set out to accomplish our goals. Look at the Harvey Parkway, we set out to accomplish that and we did. The audit shows we are in good shape. These are just some of the things the Board, in conversation, stated you wanted to see accomplished. The priorities are listed as the Board has instructed us in the past. If you feel we need to have our efforts focused elsewhere, we will entertain that. You can place them in priority order, pick your top three, or however you decide.

Mr. Hill stated, we spent a lot of time on Emergency Services development, but I am not sure it needs to be at the top of our priorities. From my view point, it would be education/schools and infrastructure. Some of the others are ok, but those are the top two that I see having the largest impact on our budget, not just now, but over the next 10-15 years.

Mr. Best stated, I would like to see employee salaries and benefits moved up on the scale, maybe 3 or 4, instead of being on the bottom.

Ms. Sutton concurred with Mr. Best and added I would like to take it a step further and map out a plan. We've been giving cost of living increases, but not anything to catch up with where we have gotten so far behind.

Ms. Brown stated, I would like to add three: education; employee salaries & benefits; and economic development and health/welfare tie for 3rd place, because without a healthy community, you will not have anybody to go to work.

Mr. Rouse stated, I would like to see us work within the frame work of the tax rate now and come up with a decision to lower the tax rate 2 or 3 cents.

Mr. Hill stated, if we did that we might end up right back where we started and I think it is too soon, based on our recent history. I think all of us would love to see it come down, but I am not sure if now is the right time. It's something we need to keep within our 3 to 5 to 7 year plan and find a way to get there if we can.

Mr. Rouse stated, the people are very upset with the current rate and if we are putting money up at the 20% level, we could lower the rate. Maybe we need to redo it and decide do we need 18%, or do we need to go down to 15%, and ease up on the tax rate.

Mr. Jarman stated, you do not want to react too quickly on this.

Mr. Hill stated there are some things still out there to be dealt with like the financial software that was brought to us earlier. At some point it is going to cost us one way or another. Health insurance can be flexible up or down, that's another hurricane that we know exists. We lowered the tax rate once before too soon, and that was a crucial error that forced us to a position of having to raise taxes back up.

Mr. Jarman stated, the bulk of the debt service was voted on by the citizens, and yes, the jail adds to the debt service we pay, but as a county, we were going to pay that regardless. We were going to keep the inmates here or send them somewhere else. The debt is now to the point where it is decreasing a little bit each year and at some point it will be paid for.

Mr. Rouse asked, what we were paying prior to the new jail?

Mr. Jarman answered, we were up to about \$1.5 million and that was with the state being very lenient, because we had deputies stepping over inmates in the cells, which was a liability. Other managers said they would not risk that and they ship them out as soon as they get to a certain number. So if we would have done that, we would have spent about \$3 million more than we did.

Mr. Rouse asked the payment amount of the new jail?

Mr. Jarman replied about \$1.4 million.

Mr. Hollowell stated, last year we received about \$288,190 for housing other counties' inmates, and received a reimbursement from the State of \$231,000 for housing misdemeanants.

Mr. Rouse asked the amount of the utility bill at the new jail?

Mr. Hollowell replied, a lot, probably about \$15,000 a month and the court house is about \$12,000 a month.

Mr. Jarman stated, the next slide is a priority order of funding that the staff has set. If the Board has a different viewpoint, we need to know. They are safety, mandates, maintain current service levels, efficiency improvements, top governing and departmental priorities. If there is something in this list that you think needs to be different, we need the Board's thoughts on what you want to accomplish.

Mr. Davis stated, one thing I feel was misquoted was the ¼ cent sales tax, which was placed on the ballot several times. If we know we are not unanimous on this, we do not need to place it on the ballot again. If we educate some of the larger farmers and community leaders and explain to them that it will possibly keep property taxes from increasing, they would understand the need for it. I think that would be a selling point. You can't just put it on the ballot if we are not all in agreement and support it.

Mr. Jarman stated, there are stipulations regarding placing it on the ballot and a time frame for getting it implemented. If it was to be voted on in November, after its been approved by the citizens, you have to wait 90 days. So if you pass it in November, it will be the second quarter of the next year before it would start being collected.

Mr. Jarman briefly reviewed the Revenue and Expenditure reports that were in the regular meeting package. Mr. Jarman reviewed the fund balance projection for the remainder of the current fiscal year, showing what we have in unreserved fund balance and what we use it for. Mr. Jarman said we will increase the current appropriated fund balance of \$3,503,762 (as of 12/31/14) by \$1,043,850 and finish fiscal year 14-15 appropriating \$4,547,612 in fund balance. Keep in mind we have assigned fund balance for specific purposes.

Mr. Jarman shared current concerns; employee health care; the affordable care act; and unemployment from the presentation worksheet. Mr. Jarman stated, we have been watching health care trends and most entities have seen substantial increases. We were advised to lower our fund balance in the insurance fund and now it is getting low. The amount budgeted per employee has been \$6453 per year for over ten years. We may need to increase the employer contribution and employee contribution; however, we will continue to study this. The Unemployment Insurance Account is something else we were required to set up by the state. The state failed to pay their federal portion of unemployment, so the state required counties to set up UI accounts to be managed by the state. Our account has to be funded at \$170,000; whereas, our claims were always much less than our budgeted amount of \$30,000.

Ms. Martin shared information in an email from the Revenue Laws Study Committee pertaining to state unemployment insurance debt. The Unemployment Insurance Accounts will be reconciled annually. Local government employers will be required to make up any deficits in the accounts. Units were billed in November 2014 for the first deficit calculations, with payment due in December 2014. This will be an annual reconciliation going forward, and is expected to follow this same schedule. We will be billed each year based on our quarterly wages.

Mr. Jarman stated, another concern is Lenoir County Public Schools' funding. The Board is aware I expressed some concerns with our funding commitment to the "One on One" project. I think it is a good project, but I was not pleased with the way the liability for future funding was worded. By the time you get to Phase 3, funding may be requested, but by then Phase 1 I pads lease renewals will add additional costs for someone. There are a lot of funding issues that I think you need to be thinking about with them. We have been holding our funding at the same level while the student population has declined. The Board of Commissioners should use caution in funding other areas such as current expense, because the General Statute is clear that our obligation is on the capital side. I think the Board should be planning joint meetings with the schools to hear information regarding their facility use. We need open dialogue. Keep in mind you approved about \$800,000 in capital this past year for chillers and HVAC systems and we don't know their plans. We might be making improvements to schools that could be replaced or closed in the near future. We just need a better understanding of what we are funding and why.

You have heard me express concerns in the past about putting additional classrooms at some locations, while we have a lot of available space in other schools. I think you just have to have a better understanding of funding. Other counties, like Craven and Onslow, have taken a strong step. They are not spending additional capital for expansion until all current space is utilized. Life has gotten us there and I know redistricting is a tough subject for people, but you have to ask these questions. Both counties are looking at redistricting. It may not be popular, but if you want to be fiscally responsible with tax dollars, it is necessary. Here in Lenoir County, we had over 800 plus homes destroyed during the flood. What happened to those people and students. What if every other house had just one child in it. That's about 400 students that were displaced. We moved that many people, but we did not redistrict the school population. We do not want to micromanage what they do or how they make educational decisions, but we do need to take responsibility for spending tax dollars wisely. We just don't want to end up like we were with Bynum School. They did a \$3 or \$4 million renovation of the library, remodeled an area, and then walked away from the school. I don't want this Board to have that reputation. Have the planning session and ask the serious questions, because school funding represents 28% of your budget.

Mr. Hill stated, I think if there are no changes in the current structure of our schools, we will be faced with another bond much sooner than this community could afford. When there was a movement to go K5, it went really well in the communities outside the city limits. Look at what it did inside the city limits. When you couple that with soft transfer policies, it have left several schools under capacity. You have some schools with 1,400-1,500 students and you have some schools with a capacity of 1,200 and they have only 400 students. Some of those spaces are being utilized for offices and other things, but that influences our budget in so many ways. You've structured a K-8 school and less than four or five miles away a school is empty of those spaces. It puts us in a situation with our School Board that we don't want to be. It puts us in a bad situation with our community and the taxes they are paying. So if we are asked to fund so many millions for Phase 3, we as commissioners have to run a more efficient and effective organization, because we cannot continue doing it the way we are doing it now. We restructure a K-8 and now a middle school is almost empty. If we continue to recognize those deficiencies and do nothing, something is wrong. I'll say this and will stand behind it wherever I go, in this community it's ok to come in from Hwy 11 North for commerce or for religious reasons, it's ok to come in and conduct business of any type, but it's not ok to come into the city for education. That makes no sense, and it must be addressed. It has a huge impact on not just today's budget, but a future bond that we will end up looking at down the road. I understand the vision and the dreaming and the ideas that are being floated around, and those thoughts and processes are good. However, with the movement of K-6-K-8 at Northwest, in concept, you see that as a good idea for that school, but we are quickly developing a system of schools, instead of a school system. We can't function effectively as a system of schools. We can only fund a school system as this Board. The net effect of that is we are not efficient in how we are doing that.

We only have the capital side and my question is how far can we go, and I am a huge supporter of public education. We can't have over crowded schools in one area, and not enough students in another. We have two buses in the city limits that transport students out in the county. Parents take students to a certain spot to meet the bus just so the children can go to Frink Middle School. That's a policy/procedure issue that costs us money and we as a Board will have to speak frankly to the School Board at the next meeting. Hopefully, there will be some give and take. The reality is, why not change it and if you do change it, what is the outcome. I think operating out of fear is the worst thing one can do. That's my concern. The fear is people will vacate the public schools, but we can't fund it inefficiently, and that is where we are headed if we decide to add mobile units to schools when other schools are empty, or we decide to change the structure of our schools without considering how it affect all of the schools. That will have a huge negative impact on this budget and future budgets, 10-15-20 years down the road. If we can have churches operating the Erasing The Lines program and the same citizens won't send their children into the schools but will send them in to erase a line, the real line that needs to be erased is the current hard city-county school lines. This may be a hard thing to say and it may cost me a vote, but we cannot drive down the property taxes in this community and allow an organization that large to run inefficiently. We just cannot allow the schools to continue to operate in that manner.

Ms. Sutton stated, we cannot run it like we did when I was on the School Board, because the environment and times have changed. We just can't continue to do the things we were able to do back then.

Ms. Brown stated, with one of the newer schools, Contentnea-Savannah, they already have mobile units. So if the K-6 concept goes through when children get ready to go to the 7th grade, where are they going? They will not be going to Rochelle where there is room for over 1100 students. They will probably go to Contentnea-Savannah. The entire back wing at Rochelle is comprised of the Structured Day Program, which is a program through JCPC. The room is available if you do some boundary drawing.

Mr. Jarman stated, this Board needs to stay keenly aware that the things you mentioned can be very costly. It's been on our mind for quite some time. Maybe we have not dealt with it as openly as we should. In 2006 when we were getting ready for the school bond, there was a study done and the total cost of the three phases was \$210 million. The decision was to tackle Phase One, which was the elementary schools. Well it's been almost ten years since we tackled Phase One. You as a Board will be faced with the utilization and structures of the schools, middle and high schools. Issues and concerns will come back to you. You will have to ask hard questions, do they want K-6 or K-8, because you have to understand the demographics of the students.

Mr. Hill mentioned, since the city and county schools merged, we have seen the loss of Lincoln City and limited annexation has had an impact on the city.

If you go down one highway corridor, you have Contentnea/Savannah, Northeast, Rochelle right off of JP Harrison Blvd. and Southeast, all within the same radius. You can't draw a circle around those schools within the appropriate districts' attendance lines and fill those facilities up unless you expand out, and that's the reality. Take one of our newer facilities, which have a pretty high capacity on the west side, and Frink Middle that is one of our older school facilities. We just spent over \$169,000 on a facility that is much newer and much better on the other side. It is under capacity and no adjustments are being made. We have to understand what I am proposing is we work with the school system, build our existing city, create and find out the higher growth areas, and designate some seats for growth in those facilities, so that it delays a bond that we might have to have. Show me a plan where you are moving kids into the seats.

Mr. Jarman stated, this is the Board's mission if you choose to accept it. Going forward, you need to have open honest discussions, because some of the issues you will discuss will be issues that may rough people's dandruff. We work through it so the tax payers can understand why we do what we do and how it is maximizing the funds put in your custody. There are serious and sensitive issues when you look at the high schools that have not been touched. So you guys have to work through it and let everybody know that you want to do what is the greater good.

Discussion Items

Mr. Jarman stated, all items are open for discussion; Which departments would the Board like to hear from; areas of increase or decrease in services; and needs like the Financial Software Upgrade which at some point you are going to have to do. With changing staff, the ability to do certain things is not there. Currently, for example, the fixed assets software we are using cannot be supported. We cannot run reports you would like to see. We could analyze our data better and quicker if we had the software to generate these reports. We will be bringing that back before you and giving you the opportunity to vote again, or if you have comments now we will be glad to address it. With facilities, we continue to look at issues like the King Street parking lot. Since the construction of the jail we need to put some money into it because it looks bad and if we don't take care of it, it will cost us more. We are dealing with an old HVAC/Boiler, Mr. Wiggins and his staff were here this weekend trying to replace pipes in walls so the heat could come on this morning. I received an email from commissioner Daughety regarding longevity, and we will discuss it openly and frankly. It is not personal, and we need and want to be responsible. We will gather information to allow for the best decision and will try to look at all sides of each issue. Mr. Daughety stated this is good sound fiscal thinking and I would like your rationale behind that statement, I looked at what other counties do and the SOG showed that 82 counties have longevity and 18 do not.

Onslow was the only surrounding county that did not. Stopping longevity for new hires will produce no savings for four years, it would take 20-25 years for total savings and the highest amount of savings, \$175,000.00, would be the removal of it completely. Currently employees qualify once they have been with the county for five years. We could change the term to qualify to 10-15 years or change the percentage we pay for shorter terms.

Mr. Daughety stated, to put it in its proper content, the email I sent to you was about showing where other municipalities had eliminated longevity pay. Obviously you would not want to do it for existing employees since you made a commitment. But more and more municipalities are doing away with it.

Mr. Jarman stated, it listed two, Mecklenburg and Gaston Counties.

Mr. Daughety stated, he is looking at the mid and long term, and he introduced this the first year he ran four years ago and if we had eliminated it, this year we would have been reaping some of these benefits. You have to look at how you structure things as we get into them and how you are saving money. I still think we should look at eliminating it for new employees from here out and also why we are giving a combination of a pension and a 401k, because most employers now are doing away with pension and keeping 401k, because the costs are overwhelming.

Mr. Jarman asked, are you referring to the private or the public side because what the government is offering is different. When you look at the salary provided on the private side verses the other, there is a large difference. The Sheriff's department is mandated to provide the 401k. We will have to look at what will we lose because that is a benefit people look for, there are multiple aspects of it

Mr. Daughety asked, since we are discussing this why not do a total salary study and see where we stand against other counties? Where do we stand in terms of benefits with the others? Maybe we need to do something different for the employees, roll it out and see it all.

Mr. Jarman stated, I do not want people to think we have not reviewed these topics. Two years ago we did a pay study and found out we were 10% behind the market. We also looked at the benefits package and we were in the middle, so it's not like it has not been presented or discussed. We have a good benefit package and if we look at longevity plans we are in the middle. Out of the 82 counties that have them, some offer a higher percentage and some offer a lower percentage. I don't mind bringing it back to the table, but I did not want the public viewing this to think we have not discussed those items. The reason we went to a longevity plan was we could not afford to keep implementing pay increases and we needed a way to reward those employees that were staying with us.

Mr. Hill said he was open for discussion, but he had a problem with removing longevity for new employees and not adjusting salaries.

Ms. Sutton said we need to get a plan to get employees' pay up to where they need to be.

Mr. Rouse stated, he would like for us to look into the Neuseway Park Nature Center. It needs to go to an enterprise system. The county should not be putting money into it. It is not generating money from people staying there. They bring their own food and necessities. They do not shop in the town. They shop prior to stopping. The county has very low rates and we should do this so it can support the bills it generates for maintenance fees from its own revenues.

Mr. Jarman stated, he will research it, get the information together, and look at the pluses and minuses.

Mr. Hill stated, he is not sure about the Flynn Home. I think there may have been some changes in the function and ownership of the home. We should do research to see if they are still doing a particular mission, which is why we were funding them, so we can determine if we should continue with funding from the county.

Mr. Rouse stated, the Pink Hill gym should fall under the town of Pink Hill and I would like you to check on the savings and costs associated with it.

Mr. Daughety stated, it is like the partnership we have with Moss Hill Ruritan Building which is a just break even with cost, and if we did not have that facility we would have to find another polling place in that area of Lenoir County. So I have a problem with the Pink Hill issue, but as long as you replace it with something else down there I'm fine. The problem is when you leave Pink Hill the nearest place to play basketball is the Moss Hill Gym.

Mr. Rouse asked, shouldn't Pink Hill help contribute to the cost of the gym?

Mr. Hill stated, maybe we should look into turning the gym over to Pink Hill.

Mr. Daughety stated, like I have been saying all along, instead of having meetings with the Board of Education we ought to have some joint discussions with the town of LaGrange, Pink Hill and discuss some of these things. So how do we do planning and stuff and don't include those municipalities in county wide planning. You are just doing planning for what you think and the city of Kinston and Pink Hill has needs and concerns.

So if we want to partner with them and we should be because they are Lenoir County tax payers, and the same with the people in LaGrange. We can't single out certain people in the county. So if you are talking about going down and doing something with the gym then you need to replace it.

Mr. Hill stated, the difference is we don't own that, we own the gym, that's the difference. The issue at Moss Hill is simply this, and it might be income negative but, it might be one of those liability areas when something is booked out there and something major happens there and we are managing that, these communities need to support what's in their small communities as well. We are not saying don't staff and don't provide services because that is what we do. But that is one place where I think the ownership is misaligned, that's just my opinion of that gym. We have inherited something that might may should have been inherited by the Town of Pink Hill.

Mr. Daughety stated, all I am saying is the people in the southern county deserves the same services as the inner city and the western, and if you are going to take it away you need to replace it. However you want to replace it that's your choice.

Mr. Jarman stated, we provide the service not necessarily the facility, I can take your example and turn it around and say if we are spending x number of dollars on a facility in Pink Hill, we should spend that same amount in LaGrange. What we are saying is it is fine with being consistent with offering the service. The municipalities have a responsibility to such as they could own the building and we provide the service.

Mr. Hill stated, the issue with Pink Hill is the school system did not build a gym at the new facility that would allow recreation. It was not the county it was a school building not a school community building. Mr. Hill stated, he understood what Mr. Daughety was saying but he did not want anybody to think all citizens were not deserving of these services at the same level. We all just need to be aware that there are liabilities out there that are out of our control. Those are the situations that should be maintained within that community. This is very similar to our conversation to how we fund the fire departments it's very consistent with that. If you go back and look at the first page of the philosophy where we talk about enterprise funds should be supported by fee's not taxes, we can say funds shall be provided by special districts as well. That is part of the philosophy we took concerning the volunteer fire departments with the special fire taxes. I think if we apply that philosophy we can deal with it from the beginning. I understand where you are coming from Mr. Daughety but I just want us to be careful about getting into situations that can cause us liabilities.

Mr. Rouse said to let Pink Hill take the responsibility of it and if Pink Hill did not want it why should the county.

Mr. Daughety asked can Pink Hill afford to take on the responsibility, and we can't pick and choose it has to be even.

Mr. Jarman stated, we don't pick and choose we try to provide an equal share. We are providing equal services, which is what we do in other areas. We do not provide the buildings in other areas.

Mr. Daughety asked are we going to provide an outside basketball gym.

Mr. Jarman stated, you know I am a supporter of Recreation, but when we accepted the gym at that point and time I said I felt like it ought to be Pink Hill accepting the gym.

Mr. Daughety stated, let's meet with them and talk about it.

Mr. Rouse stated, that is what we have been trying to say.

Mr. Hill stated, he did not have a problem with setting up meeting to have the open dialogue type of planning session and meetings with them. There are a lot of issues out there. Coming from an athletic background I can see them and again we need to be careful. I just don't think it's a county wide function for us to be in the buildings like we are with Moss Hill and Pink Hill.

Mr. Daughety said there are liabilities with a lot of things.

Mr. Davis asked, Mr. Chairman can we discuss this further with some food in our stomachs.

Mr. Jarman asked did he want to address changing that philosophy?

Mr. Hill stated, he was not sure how to state what needed to be said pertaining to special taxes and it might be too complicated because we will get into fees and fines. It can be worked into the budget.

Mr. Jarman stated, he believes he understands the directions of this Board. The revenue source that's available for a specific area or service is what should pay for the service it's not general funds.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Hill.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vickie F. King".

Vickie F. King
Clerk to the Board

Reviewed By

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael W. Jarman".

Michael W. Jarman
County Manager