
Minutes
Cumberland County Board of Commissioners
June 4, 2001, 6:30 p.m.
Public Hearing on FY02 Budget
Cumberland County Courthouse
Fayetteville, NC

PRESENT: Chairman J. Lee Warren, Jr.
Vice Chairman Breeden Blackwell
Commissioner Talmage Baggett
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Kenneth Edge
Commissioner John Henley
Commissioner Billy King
James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Rhonda Raynor, Deputy Clerk to the Board
Marsha Fogle, Clerk to the Board
Budget Staff
Cindy DiMartino, Administrative Assistant
Myra Brooks, Legal Secretary

Chairman Warren called the meeting to order and gave the Invocation.

The Chairman reviewed the rules and procedures for the public hearing.

SPEAKERS:

1. Susie Gnann - Fayetteville Area Sentencing Center. Ms. Gnann thanked the Board for their support in the past. She noted that they will try to work within the 18% cut. She said she is hopeful she can find money from another source. She noted that the county match pulls down money from the state. She will need to find \$3,200 in order to get state funds. She noted the problem with finding another source of revenue is to find one that is recurring.
2. Bob White – Seniors Call to Action. Mr. White introduced Mr. Mike Inacuilla.
3. Mike Inacuilla – Seniors Call to Action. Mr. Inacuilla said the reduction in their budget will adversely affect their services, particularly in transportation areas.
4. Sylvia Ray – Women’s Center. Ms. Ray thanked the Board for the funding they receive.
5. Rick Glazier, member, Board of Education. Mr. Glazier said the county has given lip service to the needs of the educational system too long. However, he noted that in the past 3-4 years the county has given funding which has allowed the school system to see real dividends and become competitive with other school systems in the state. Mr. Glazier noted the resolution

adopted by the Board requesting the school system to use its reserves to bridge the gap between what the county can give them and what they need. He said if the Board is confident about some additional state revenues, he would suggest the county use their fund balance to make up the difference since it is larger than the school's. Mr. Glazier noted that all budgets are not equal and prioritizing is necessary.

6. Mary Theroux – Ms. Theroux expressed her concern about cutting the school nurses. She said they are vital to all schools. She noted there are 83 schools in the county and only 14 nurses serving these schools. She said to cut school nurses would be inconsistent with what is being done in other counties. Ms. Theroux also expressed concern about cutting the crossing guards. She said layoffs are the easy way out and said that once the cuts are made the damage has been done.

7. Cindy McCormick – speaking for Dr. Bill Harrison, Superintendent and President of the Principals and Asst. Principals Assoc. Ms. McCormick noted that Dr. Harrison could not be present because he was attending graduations. His remarks were that we teach not only by words but also by deeds. He noted the importance of continuing the upward trend we are experiencing in education in this county. He also said there is no acceptable alternative than funding the School's no growth budget.

8. Norma Gould – has daughter at Max Abbott. Her daughter takes medication and it is hard for her to imagine a school system with nurses. She said the school nurses are instrumental in educating the teachers about medical problems and how to address them when they occur. She noted that not everyone can give a shot or medication. She expressed concern that if a child should die at school because there is no nurse they may be repercussions. She urged the Board not to eliminate school nurses.

9. Susan Adams – Ms. Adams noted this budget is difficult. She noted the issues of eliminating school crossing guards, nurses and the other cuts in school budget. She expressed concern that juvenile crime would rise. She said the ultimate solution would be to ask the Federal government for more money. Ms. Adams said she is also lobbying for a state sales tax.

10. Leslie Craig – Ms. Craig said she has seen wonderful changes taking place in education in the last few years. She noted the appropriate appropriation of resources. She expressed concern that the cuts will affect class size and eliminate some of the vital programs in the school system. She noted that when industry looks to locate in a community one of the things they look at is the educational system. She said we get what we pay or don't pay for.

11. Cathy Baker – PTA President – Westarea. Ms. Baker compared the commissioners to the Wizard in the Wizard of Oz, saying the Wizard was not a bad person but simply a bad Wizard. She said that perhaps the Board members are not bad people, but just bad at budgeting. She asked the Board to be accountable. She asked them to do it for the children. Ms. Baker also noted she is a volunteer in the school system and has volunteered over 400 hours. Ms. Baker noted that Michigan spends \$6,000 per pupil expenditure as opposed to Cumberland County's \$1300.

12. Deborah Gould – Sophomore at Terry Sanford – 15 years old. Ms. Gould told the

Board that to eliminate the SRO's would put the school campus in grave danger. She said her younger sister could not have completed school without a school nurse. She noted the importance of orchestra in the middle schools and other curricular activities. She asked the Board to reinstate the nurses and SRO's

13. Ethlyn Baker – Ms. Baker said the cuts will have grave ramifications. She noted that if you cut teachers it puts overload on the teachers that are left. She said she feared the prison populations would increase. She asked the Board to spend the money on the children.

14. Becky Henry (has child at W.T. Brown) She is a volunteer in the school. She expressed concern in the cuts in physical education, music and the arts. She also expressed concern about overcrowded classrooms. She said teacher pull money of out their pockets now to buy supplies. She said the cuts will promote poverty, ignorance and violence.

15. Anna Porter (has 2 children in the school system) – Don't eliminate schools of choice. She said there should be nurses at every school every day. She noted when families make a decision to move here they look at the education programs.

16. Monique and Roscoe Phipps – They came to Fort Bragg because of the good things they heard about the school system. They have a special needs child. When he retires it will be hard for him to justify keeping his child in this school system if these cuts go through.

17. Tony Fenn – (has a son at W T Brown and is president elect of PTA) – Teachers are not being paid what they deserve. Teachers have migrated from up north to teach school here. Don't cut.

18. Sophia Moore – Concerned that school cuts will deprive children of an education. There will be dropouts, more teenage pregnancies, and more uneducated and illiterate people. Pay teachers the salaries they deserve. Leave a positive legacy.

19. Zandra Haywood – Teacher and president of PTA – Nick Jerald school. Concerned cuts will increase classroom size. She stays after school many evenings. Parents that come to visit classrooms have nowhere to sit. "Keep hope alive".

20. Anita Blue (School Teacher) – Let budget show that children are first. SRO's and crossing guards are very important.

21. Bert Esworthy (President – National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) Waiting list at Mental Health is 924. One third of these are children. The growing list translates into tragedies. They ask no special favors, just to be treated fairly. Abide by the settlement agreement made in 1997 as far as funding for Mental Health is concerned.

22. Richard Hall – Students are suppose to have an equal opportunity for an education. Our expenditures per pupil are far from equitable compared to other systems. Difficult to attract new industry when it sees we are 58th in per pupil expenditure. Durham County pays twice what Cumberland County does. Students should be provided sufficient academic skills to enable them to compete.

23. Natalie Godwin – Supports school nurses.
24. Carrie Boisski (Teacher) – Moved from New York to Lumberton to Hope Mills. Has always wanted to teach. Concerned that 15 elementary school teachers may lose their jobs, as well as cuts in psychological services. If cuts go through the children will lose.
25. Nancy Szymkowiak (Exec. Director of ARC) – Concerned about cuts for people with developmental disabilities. Cumberland County Mental Health has a long waiting list; however there are many that are not on the waiting list. Shortage of ICMF group homes.
26. Julie Smigiel – Moved here 9 years ago. Don't cut schools of choice. Cuts will take us back to where we were before.
27. Johnny Blackwell (E Melvin Honeycutt) – Has a child with a learning disability. Don't cut Exceptional Children's Teachers. Cuts unacceptable.
28. Jennifer Crawford (child at Cumberland Road Elementary) – Child had to stay in kindergarten two years. Child is now progressing nicely at Cumberland Road Elementary. Afraid the cuts will affect her child.
29. Wilhima Ferguson – Thanks for allowing her child to go to Cumberland Road school. Child is doing exceptional work.
30. Barbara Gillespie – Don't cut school budget.
31. Valarie Campana (substitute teacher & mother) – Children need to learn morality. Improvements have been made in the school system; don't go backwards. Education is crucial.
32. Changelle Goodman (registered nurse) – Moved to Fayetteville 18 months ago. US not renowned for its public school system. When people decide where to settle, they look at the quality of education in the area. If the quality falls or there is a perception that it has fallen, people will look elsewhere to live.
33. Candy Edwards (parent with three children) – Children should be important to elected officials. Children should be encouraged and motivated. Don't remove needed programs that do this. Schools should be able to continue providing the I.V. program. This program helps children foster high academic standards, citizenship, etc. Education should be looked at first.
34. Shellie Surles (Deputy Sheriff and mother of three children) – She has been employed with the Sheriff's Office for four months. She is also retired military. She is one of the 43 officers that will be laid off due to the proposed budget cuts. She noted these people represent families. These officers put their lives on the line and are not adequately compensated. She is aware of husbands and wives who are both being laid off by the County. These people may be able to find jobs in other counties but that will hurt Cumberland County's economy. School Crossing Guards need to be funded. The population the County protects is growing and deputies are needed.

35. Rod Ricks – Don't blame Fort Bragg and Pope AFB for some of the County's problems. He noted county projects such as the Coliseum, the new Mental Health facility, DSS building and new jail. Put prisoners on work release. Do all law enforcement vehicles need decals and radar equipment, i.e. Highway Patrol, Police and Sheriff's Deputies. Noted School Crossing Guards are needed. Make deputies perform those duties. No non-essential vehicles should be driven home by County employees.
36. Jane Smith – (teacher) She can't do her job without resources or too many students. Special needs children need programs. Need arts programs and athletics. A quality community doesn't come cheaply.
37. Cheryl Ridley – The Family Recovery Services provided by Mental Health are vital. She is a recovering addict and could not have made it without those services.
38. Clinton Harris – Thanked Sarah Piland, Dr. Harrison, school system and citizens for support given to the Massey Hill Classical students involved in the bus accident.
39. Julie Macrae (former teacher & volunteer at Grays Creek School) - She has children in school. Raising taxes and dipping into reserve funds will not help. Need to be proactive. If 100,000 citizens gave \$50.00 each \$5 million would be raised. Must give the Commissioners a chance to dig out of this hole. She presented Commissioner Blackwell with a check for \$100.00. She noted anyone could make a check out to Cumberland County and designate it for the schools or the Sheriff's Office and it will help pull the County out of the financial hole it is in.
40. Andi Webb (teacher at Grays Creek School) - Understands the decisions are tough. Children will be most affected. She read comments from her kindergarten students. Physical education, assistant teachers and nurses are important.
41. Betty Neil Parsons (retired teacher) - Don't show that it is okay to threaten the future of our children. Children learn by seeing, hearing and doing. Music and athletics help teach the basics. Don't let these things get cut.
42. Freida Smith (parent and teacher) - She expects small class size, two adults per classroom and that children will be exposed to the best teaching practices. Cuts will fall short of her expectations. Children deserve top priority. Don't put tax money in other places. Put education first.
43. Derrick Raphael (student at Pine Forest High School) - Don't cut middle school athletics. Wants those who come after him to have the same opportunities he had. Funding should not be cut. It should be increased.
44. Jim Surles (employee of school system) - Most important part of the community is the schools. Must provide quality education. Children are leaders of tomorrow.
45. Lilly Henderson – Had suffered from clinical depression. With help of Cumberland County Mental Health she is going through a program that will soon be cut due to budget. She

needs the program.

46. Stella Hines (teacher and parent of four children) - She is concerned with the middle and high school cuts. Expect to have her children returned to her safely when she sends them to school. She is concerned with safety and athletic cuts. We are inviting violence with these cuts. She is part of a team at her school and will lose part of that team with the budget cuts. All areas offered create a whole child.

47. Gary Southerland (teacher at 71st Classical Middle School) - New people coming into the city and county will not stay without a good school system. New industry coming in will be hurt. Quality employees are needed for new businesses. Employees come from the school system. Cut anything but education.

48. Lois Carpenter – Must not consider schools an expense but rather an investment. Support full school funding as requested.

49. Tim Howle – Education must be primary consideration. School Board made a good faith effort with a no-growth budget. Arguments made by Board of Education make sense. Cuts are unacceptable. Would like to see a pledge to fund schools at the state average. Good schools are important to economic development.

50. Anthony Pollock (County employee) - Been employed with Sheriff's Office for 19 years. County employees have not received cost of living increases. County Manager's Office reorganized and managers were given significant pay raises that were in excess of 25% of his salary. Administration and Commissioners knew the budget crisis was coming. County employees did not cause the problem, why should they have to pay for it. How can he provide for his family? Is this what he gets for his years of loyal services. Serious morale problem among County employees now. Please give serious thought and save County jobs.

51. Tammy Harris – Spoke about deputies. People are their number one priority. What will happen to response time when deputies are laid off? Majority of citizens is against the layoffs.

52. Jessica Osborne (11 year old student) - She wants to be a deputy. She needs a safe neighborhood. A deputy helps in her neighborhood. He is going to lose his job. Please don't get rid of deputies.

53. Julian Norris (Principal of Baldwin Elementary) - Commissioners are doing their best and not running away. He hopes the citizens can say that each of them did not do their best but what was required for children.

54. Kim Nazarchyk (Chairman of Library Board of Trustees) - The proposed library budget will take them back to their 1996-97 funding level, which will be down 30%. Facilities have increased 75%. In the 1990's the citizens voted to expand the library system. The County has a good library system and it has received a lot of recognition. The libraries need equitable funding.

55. Jerri Hendricks (teacher) - She is concerned about the loss of school nurses. Nurses provide critical services that teachers cannot provide. She suggested that nurses could work on

the 10-month school calendar instead of working the school calendar and then in the clinics for the two remaining months of the year. Let the school nurses work ten months and reduce their salaries. That would save \$100,000.

56. Tom Parent – Government subsidizes military kids. Military members own homes and pay taxes. A lot of county departments have already overspent their budgets for the year. The 97 School Crossing Guards are worth one child's life. Deputies need to help perform this function.

57. Mike Lallier (Chair of the School Bond Referendum Committee and serves on the School Budget Advisory Committee) - The School Bond Referendum Committee made it plain to citizens that if the bonds were passed that taxes would increase. There is no reason to decrease school funding. If property tax increase is needed, so be it. Schools have shown fiscal responsibility.

58. John Swope and Lynn Green – Appreciate support given to FAEDC. The amount of funding requested by FAEDC for the upcoming fiscal year is 20% less than last year. They will do the best job they can. Noted a Commissioner and City County member would soon become a voting member on the FAEDC Board. Lynn Green expressed her appreciation for support from the Board with the Cingular deal.

59. Elizabeth Lehman (teacher) - Middle school athletic program works with adolescents. Sports help these students feel connected and that they contribute to the community. If programs are cut she feels gang participation will increase. They need the exceptional children programs.

60. Dan Bergeron – Biggest concern for people new to the area are the schools. How can funding for the Coliseum be found and not for education and law enforcement.

61. Donna Mims (school principal) - The community has demonstrated that education counts and is most important. The money that has been entrusted to the schools has provided positive results.

62. Sian Panter (teacher) - Asked Board to look at the big picture. Look at how education affects the community. Cuts will hurt the schools and the community.

63. William Brooks (parent) - Schools of choice provide an excellent experience and smaller class size. Funding of education is important to achieve economic goals.

64. Cecila McBryde (nurse and teacher) - All individual programs are important. The one-cent sales tax is needed instead of property owners paying the burden for services. Would get more money from one-cent sales tax than a one-cent property tax increase.

65. Cynthia Buie – Need to keep the citizens we have here rather than concentrating on bringing in new ones. Referenced crossing guards and the impact of not having them. Sports activities are needed.

66. Rebecca Hankins – Children are struggling to read. She volunteers at Margaret Willis Elementary. Lower class sizes in lower grades help learning and helps struggling readers. They need assistants in the lower grades.
67. Doris V. Broome-Martin – She has four children in school. One of her children has developmental disabilities. She volunteers and helps every day. Teachers at Rockfish Elementary are great. Middle School athletics are needed.
68. Martina Bober – Many children come from one-parent homes. Arts, language and physical education are essential. Class size determines the quality of education. Support schools.
69. Melanie DeBouse (parent and teacher) - What will she tell her students who need middle school athletic programs, arts programs, etc.? How can she encourage them to be globally competitive when they can't get basic resources?
70. Maxine McCoy – Schools have sales to help support themselves. Staff development funds have been cut. Businesses and colleges have complained that students aren't prepared. The school system has made great strides to change that and prepare students. Reconsider cuts.
71. Christine Pavel – Opposed to school cuts. Don't cut deputies.
72. Gina McCormick – Cuts will leave a devastating and lasting effect on school children. She is concerned about school nurses, schools, public libraries and crossing guards. Give children the best.
73. Bessie Magby – She represents the clients served in her homes by Mental Health. Day programs and other services for these people are diminishing. Over 900 people are on a waiting list at Mental Health. The community cannot serve the individual needs of these people. Money is needed to meet their needs. Please consider the disabled and mentally ill.
74. Lei Knight (Drama teacher) - Must not ignore choice programming. Test scores have increased and the school system received the Kennedy Award. Think about children first. Crossing guards are needed. Teacher cuts will compromise education and future of children. A teacher helped get her out of a gang and to become a teacher and responsible parent.
75. Peggy R. Todd (crossing guard) - She has an important job. She has saved lives in her job. She doesn't want to see a child killed. She is a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She tries to teach children and they thank her for doing so. Her job is important and so are the children.
76. Al Scruggs (teacher) – As a teacher he needs to be redundant so he will also be redundant with the Board. The schools are doing things right because test scores are going up. They also work on self-esteem. Crossing guards are needed. Go up on taxes. It is worth it.
77. Dr. Graham Meyer – He is in support of crossing guards and Montessori program.

Montessori program teaches responsibility and respect and develops moral intelligence. Cumberland Road Elementary Montessori program needs to continue.

78. Charles Lawson – He is a member of the Cumberland/Fayetteville Association of Educators. More money is put into the jail than into education. Education must go beyond political rhetoric. Must have good investment in education.

79. Bernadette Gilmore – Education is important. It should concern all parts of the community. The Commissioners are not being good stewards of tax dollars by cutting school funding. School funding is an investment in the community. They must consider special needs children.

80. L. A. Barner – He is from the Bonnie Doone area. Anyone can be a leader when the times are good. He commended the County Manager for his leadership. Those with the “can’t do” attitude aren’t leaders. The Sheriff’s Office should cut supplies and cars instead of people. Let teachers and students be crossing guards. There are several empty classrooms in the schools. There is no positive influence in expenditures and performance. He doesn’t want to see anyone lose his or her job. Anyone who earns over \$35,000 per year should have his or her salary cut. Outside agencies should be cut. Metro police and consolidation of the Inspections and Planning Department should be considered. Show positive leadership.

81. Kimberly Wrobel – Schools need full-time nurses, officers and assistant teachers. Staff members have to give medication to her son. Too much medication needs to be administered to have to be done by a staff member. Children are being put in danger by allowing staff to administer medication.

82. Esther Barkley (President of Friends of the Library) – She is impressed with the Coliseum, libraries and schools. She never thought to ask about the tax rate when she moved here. To automatically vote for no new taxes is an avoidance of duties as Commissioners. Library funding cut is drastic. She feels services will continue to shrink. She doesn’t want a library to close due to lack of funding. The libraries serve all residents. It is an integral part of society. Crossing guards, good schools, libraries and social services are necessary.

83. Greg Rich – Community needs a strong police force, schools and libraries. Proposed cuts are very deep and have decreased the operating hours of the libraries as well as personnel. He asked the Board to think about whom the cuts will hurt the most. He would like them to recall and consider that the citizens voted to fund schools and expand the library system. Reconsider library cuts.

84. Jean Christie (teacher and parent) – She fears people will leave the county because they feel the Board doesn’t care about children. The message being sent is that they don’t care. The budget being proposed is fiscally and morally irresponsible. Budget cuts will adversely affect children.

85. Beverly Cleverley – She is the President of the Cumberland/Fayetteville Association of Educators consisting of over 1,600 members. The Board of Education presented a no-growth budget. How can the Board approve a budget that adversely affects children? He noted the

stringed instrument and sports programs and the SRO Officers.

Chairman Warren thanked everyone on behalf of the Board for coming to the public hearing. The Board appreciates their concern. He noted that the Commissioners have taken a pay cut with the new budget. To his knowledge, they are the only ones that have done that. The Board is extremely proud of the fact that in the last eight years, funding for schools has increased 100%. The total budget for the schools is \$297 million, of which the County contributes \$57 million. There has been a 100% increase in county funding since 1992. The Board of Commissioners has put children and teachers first. They have worked hard to raise the level of funding. The County doesn't fund roads. The Board has not yet made up their minds on the budget. These are serious times and that is why there are no smiles on their faces. Every school nurse, teacher, student, crossing guard and deputy is important. Libraries, mental health, senior citizens on fixed incomes and county employees are important. The Board has been accused of mismanagement. In 1992 the voters of this county approved \$50 million in school bonds. In 1992 the voters approved library bonds. In 1994 the votes approved FTCC bonds. In 1998 the voters approved \$98 million in school bonds and in November of 2000 the voters approved the college and university bonds. The college and university bonds will require a \$16 million match from the County. There hasn't been mismanagement. They might have made some misjudgments. The voters have approved a lot of bond referendums. There is only one place the County can get revenue and that is through the property tax.

Last week, he and Vice Chairman Blackwell attended a Senior Citizens picnic. He was disturbed to hear a story from one of the ladies that lives on a fixed income and told him he had to sell her farm and move in with her children because she could not afford to pay her taxes. The Commissioners have an extremely hard decision to make. It is easy to say they should raise taxes. They must look at the big picture and consider senior citizens. Hopefully, we will all be a senior citizen one day. It is easy to get criticized and ridiculed. The Commissioners were elected to make the best decision they know how. He has worked with many good boards and this is one of them. The Board doesn't take their business lightly. They know what they have to deal with. This Board works and has taken a pay cut. He asked that everyone remember them in their prayers. They have tough decisions to make and they won't make everyone happy, but will do the best job they can do.

MOTION: Commissioner Council offered a motion to adjourn.
SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Meeting adjourned at 10:46 PM.

Clerk to the Board