

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 29, 2001, 5:30PM
BUDGET WORKSHOP
CUMBERLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE
ROOM 564
FAYETTEVILLE, NC**

PRESENT: J. Lee Warren, Jr., Chairman
Breedon Blackwell, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Kenneth Edge
Commissioner Talmage Baggett
Commissioner John Henley
Commissioner Billy King
James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Marsha Fogle, Clerk to the Board
Budget Staff

ABSENT: Commissioner Jeannette Council – Family Illness

INVOCATION: Commissioner Talmage Baggett

1. SHERIFF'S OFFICE – The Sheriff read a prepared statement. Some highlights of the statement are as follows:

Since he was elected the Sheriff noted he has worked long and hard to upgrade the equipment for the deputies. He said he took over a jail that was plagued with problems which exposed the county to potential lawsuits. Resource officers have been provided to all middle and high schools when the City of Fayetteville withdrew from the SRO Program. The Sheriff said the Sheriff's Office has built a modern well-trained agency capable of providing the level of service the community deserves and have done much of it with grant money totaling over \$5 million. He noted Cumberland County is one of two in the State of North Carolina that is nationally accredited. The Sheriff said square miles and population are not good yardsticks to measure crime; the number of crimes in the jurisdiction is. He said the number of crimes in Cumberland County, outside the city limits, is twice what the other jurisdictions have listed. In comparing jails, the most important question to ask is what is the daily population and what is the total staff. He noted that Florence has a total staff of 97, and their average population supervised is 290, not 528. Cumberland County Jail has 95 staff and supervises an average population of 363. The Sheriff also noted Fayetteville has annexed 43 areas since June 1996 with a total population of 38,975 people. All of these people lived on 14.4 square miles. This still leaves 513 square miles where the Sheriff's Office is the only law enforcement for 126,530 people. He noted the number of new housing developments and schools that have opened in the last several years. The Sheriff said he has added new employees since 1998, but as a result of requests, i.e., School Resource Officers and courtroom deputies. He said only 3 new civilians have been added to the Sheriff's Office. He also noted four people have been added to help plan and recruit for the new jail. The Sheriff told the Board that during February, March and April of this year, 4,224 knives and 2,673 other weapons were confiscated from people entering the courthouse. The Sheriff said the budget situation will force him to reduce 173 positions (62 sworn officers, 16 civilians and 94 part-time crossing guards). He said the reduction will cause slower response time, less supervision and back-up for patrol deputies and slower response to investigating case. He said "is this what we want in our County?"

Commissioner King inquired about the cost of the DARE Program. The cost is \$303,000. Commissioner King asked the Sheriff if he had to choose between the DARE Program and the School Crossing Guards, which one would he keep. The Sheriff did not give a definitive response. He said both programs were important.

Commissioner Edge submitted an idea about how the schools and sheriff's office could address the school crossing guard issue. He suggested that perhaps teacher assistants could double as school crossing guards. In addition, he noted that when adult drivers were no longer used as bus drivers, students drive the buses. The Sheriff responded that as a past principal, Mr. Edge, would know more about whether that would work. The Sheriff indicated the school crossing guards are not mandated; however, he would be willing to train people to provide that service.

Commissioner Henley said he thought there were other options in providing the crossing guards, i.e., determine where the critical need is, ask PTA's to provide volunteers, and/or ask other service organizations to help out in this area.

Commissioner Henley noted the County could save \$300,000 by delaying the hiring of new jailers by one month. Money could also be saved by looking at the number of cars to see if they are needed. The Sheriff said he would rather cut equipment than people.

Dan Ford, Chief Jailer, responded to a question concerning a statement made by the Architect for the new jail in which he said we could save 20% in manpower with direct supervision in the jail. What the

Architect actually meant was we could save 20% more with direct supervision than the type of supervision we currently have.

Commissioner Blackwell inquired if the people laid off in the Sheriff's Office would be offered the new jailer positions. Dan Ford noted that the training of a deputy and a jailer are very different. For one thing, a jailer's paid grade is lower than a deputy sheriff. In addition, jailers have no arrest power. Jailers also do not participate in the same retirement systems as the deputies. The Sheriff noted that anyone who is rified shall have top priority for any new positions.

Commissioner Blackwell also inquired about privatizing the courthouse security. It was noted that a private firm does not have detention/arrest power.

Commissioner Baggett noted the importance of school crossing guards. However, he said there may be some locations which do not need them.

Commissioner Blackwell suggested that custodians could be used as crossing guards. He also suggested that parents could be asked to volunteer to provide that critical service. The Sheriff said an important element is to make sure these people are committed. They have to work rain or shine.

Commissioner Henley inquired if every pod in the new jail has to be open. The response was there are different classifications of prisoners, i.e., females, trustees, felon block, misdemeanor block, etc., which require separation; therefore, many of the pods will have to be open, even if there is only one or two people in them.

Commissioner Edge inquired if school resource officers who are in schools that are in close proximity to each other could share a car. The Sheriff said they need cars in case they make an arrest and have to bring someone downtown. He also noted that some of the resource officers work after school and need transportation.

Commissioner Blackwell inquired about the Special Response Team. There are 13 people on the team. The Sheriff noted they do other things besides this special assignment. Cuyler Windham said they have 2 days a month of mandatory training. They work in high crime areas when they are not on duty as the Special Response Team.

Chairman Warren asked the Sheriff to talk about drug forfeiture money. The Sheriff noted they use this money for a lot of different things, i.e., equipment, radios and they want to build an indoor shooting range

Commissioner Blackwell asked Dan Ford to talk about the Inmate Welfare Fund. Mr Ford noted that the Jail provides toiletry items, candy, etc. for the prisoners to purchase. The money goes in a Welfare fund. The profits from this fund are used to buy computers, tables, chairs, audio visual equipment, tv's, washer/dryers, etc. for use by the inmates.

2. LIBRARY

Jodi Rauscher, standing in for Jerry Thrasher, told the Board that the 18% cuts will greatly affect the operations of the libraries. She noted there will be less books purchased and a decrease in money for maintenance and repair. Ms. Rauscher also noted they will eliminate 30 part-time positions and 2 full-time custodial positions. Childrens' programs will be cut back also. The State Aid funding will be cut 18% (\$55,000). If the State determines the cuts in Cumberland County are not across the Board, we could experience a greater cut or they could take us to court.

Commissioner Baggett thanked the Library Staff and Board for keeping the main branch open. Other branches will be open the same times each week, but will not be open all of the time. Commissioner Blackwell noted the Library would get a big boost if they were allowed to keep the money they collected in fees, etc.

3. HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Janet Lindbloom, Director, noted 36 positions were cut in the Health Department. She expressed concern about the loss of school nurses; however she noted it is a non-mandated activity. Ms. Lindbloom noted the following adjustments to the budget she submitted on 4/20/01:

Med Lab Assistant – Medical Laboratory Tech, Bob Proulx, resigned in April. This will allow the Health Department to reallocate those funds to the Med Lab Assist. II position currently occupied by Ms West, and save her position.

Environmental Health Supervisor – This person elected not to go through with early retirement in April, after the budget was submitted. However, with the unanticipated retirement in May of Dr. Johnson, the Health Supervisor position can be supported for next fiscal year.

Physician Extender – Dr. Johnson's position will be converted to cover a nurse practitioner's salary. This will help to cover both the jail and the third floor adult health clinic.

Physician III – Medicaid reimbursement rates will increase effective June 1, 2001, due to the State determining that unbundled charges were not revenue neutral. This will result in an increase in Medicaid revenue sufficient to support this provider’s salary and fringe benefits.

Med Lab Assistant I – With the increase in provider coverage for women and children, an additional med lab assistant will be needed. This will be supported by the increase in Medicaid revenue (\$24,000)

Vacant LPN Position – The Health Department is severely lackin in Information Technology support both at the data processing and clinical levels. The goal will be to have a clinically oriented position in information systems to assist with the increased technology demands and HIPAA requirements for the upcoming fiscal year.

Ms. Lindbloom said work is ongoing about a fish program that will eat mosquito larvae. She noted the Mosquito program has been cut (\$56,000). Ms. Lindbloom noted that the Sheriff had cut the deputy that is stationed at the Health Department. She noted the importance of a deputy in the Health Department.

Ms. Lindbloom said she is collaborating with DSS, the Hospital and Mental Health to look for ways to decrease costs.

As for school nurses, with \$380,000 she can put 8-9 of them back to work. This is in addition to three that are in the budget and one that the school system pays for.

Commissioner Edge commended Ms. Lindbloom in looking at areas in which services can be combined.

Commissioner Henley said that changes in South Regional AHEC may allow them to become a stronger participant in health care delivery at our Health Department and Hospital.

Commissioner King asked Ms. Lindbloom what new money she is requesting. Ms. Lindbloom said that she needs \$380,000 to put 8-9 nurses back in the schools (elementary and middle schools) and \$56,000 for the Mosquito program.

4. INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Ken Sykes, Director, told the Board he has cut five positions (2 vacancies and 3 people). He said he needs to keep a building inspector and a zoning position. Cost for these two positions is \$61,241. Mr. Sykes noted that even though the work load has tapered off a bit, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in the office. Mr. Sykes noted the only way he can raise money is to increase fees. He said it has been several years since fees have gone up.

Commissioner Blackwell inquired if Administration is looking into coming the Planning and Inspections Departments. James Martin, County Manager, indicated they were.

5. LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Grainger Barrett, County Attorney, appealed to the Board to give him a ¾ position (Paralegal). Mr. Barrett noted the County Attorney’s budget has gone from \$541,541 in FY99 to \$381,527 for FY02. This is a 30% reduction. In 1999, they had 8 full time and 1 part time contract position. In FY02 there will be 5 full-time positions (41% reduction from FY99). Mr. Barrett pointed out that operating expenses, net of legal advertising, are about 5% of the budget. He is proposing that the Board allow him to restore currently filled paralegal position ¾ time for FY’s 2002 and 2003.

Full time salary/benefits:	\$36,905
¾ cost	\$27679

Mr. Barrett noted the incumbent will be taking FMLA leave for 3 months as of the last week of June, 2001. Therefore FY 02 funding will be ¾ of ¾ full time cost: FY02 - \$20,759 & FY03 - \$27,679. Mr. Barrett said Fund 630 can be adjusted down from \$123,000 to \$100,000 to cover the FY02 cost.

If the 18% cuts prevail, the Legal Department will have one legal secretary who will be responsible for doing most of the word processing, discoveries, and answering the phone. There will be a Senior Legal Assistant who is the office manager and provides help to Attorney Laura Johnson, or wherever needed.

Commissioner Baggett noted he was aware of the many telephone calls received in the Legal Department and Governing Body. He noted many of the calls are from people seeking other departments and/or telephone numbers. He noted an improvement in the telephone index would solve some of the problems. It was noted the telephone index will be different this year, hopefully alleviating some of the many phone calls in the two departments.

6. MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Ben Watson, Chairman, Mental Health Board, noted the following impact as a result of the 18% cut in the Mental Health Department:

- 924 citizens are currently on waiting lists for services, will increase;
- capacity to serve the citizens has been diminished;
- employee morale, retention, and recruitment have been negatively impacted;
- county is not complying with the terms /conditions of the July 19, 1997 settlement agreement with the State of North Carolina and Area Board, "county funds budgeted for payment to the area program beginning July 1, 1997, and annually thereafter, shall be no less than \$5,303,891."

Commissioner Baggett noted the Mental Health Department does a good job with less money.

An 18% cut in Mental Health amounts to \$656,207.

7. SOIL CONSERVATION COST SHARE PROGRAM

John Ray asked the commissioners to put money back in the budget for a technician amounting to \$3,879 and one other person in the amount of \$2,500.

8. SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Bill Scarlett, Director, DSS, said he was not going to appeal his budget. He said, however, he did want to make the commissioners aware of how all of the cuts will affect families. He said he feared the public's perception of the integrity and quality of the programs would be damaged. He also noted concern that DSS will not be able to stay on the front end of automation. He said in order to meet the cuts staff may have to follow the program funding. He noted a concern about fewer people and a heavier workload, as well as a decrease in the face to face contact with the public.

9. BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Mr. Bob Campbel, Supervisor, Board of Elections, noted these cuts have created a lot of stress and bad attitudes among employees. He said he will be losing a training officer and has cut his operating costs significantly. He also expressed concern about the rumor that the Board of Elections will be moving back to the Courthouse.

Commissioner Edge inquired if municipalities contribute to the Board of Elections. Mr. Campbell said they recoup their money for municipal elections (direct cost).

10. LANDSCAPE BIDS

Proposals were sent to Landscaping Services requesting sealed proposals for landscaping services for Cumberland County. The following bids were received:

County Parks & Recreation	\$419,600.80
Green Biz Nursery	\$226,645.00
Solanco	\$360,896.00
Watson Nursery, Inc.	\$263,940.00

Commissioner Henley expressed concern that the low bidder would be able to provide the service at his quoted bid price.

MOTION: Commissioner Henley moved to reject all bids, and retain the Landscaping Department in the county budget.
SECOND: Commissioner King
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Under the 18% reduction the Landscape Department will lose a total of 3 positions. Terry Herring, Supervisor, County Landscape Department, noted the loss of two people will cause a hardship for them in maintaining the new DSS building and the new county detention center that will come online in 2002. He said they will be able to do ok with cutting the vacant position, but they really do need the other two.

11. REGISTER OF DEEDS

George Tatum, via memo, requested an increase in his budget as follows:

- reinstate \$14,000 for microfilming (101 410 4145 330) – needed for the processing of records;
- increase Overtime (101-410-4145-1220) – they are currently working overtime and cuts will require more overtime to get the job done

12. Other concerns

James Martin, County Manager, noted that employees rified will be issued official letters tomorrow notifying them of the RIF.

Commissioner Blackwell said he was concerned about some phone calls he has been receiving about the RIF process. He said he could not understand why an employee with only 5-6 months left before retirement would be cut and an employee with 6-7 months would still be employed.

Commissioner Henley noted you can't just look at seniority, it can't be last in first out. He said you have to look at the other aspects of the job also.

Commissioner Blackwell also expressed concern that some employees were notified by letter. In addition, he said he had spoken to one employee who is being rified when the person is not paid out of the general fund. Also one employee said he had saved the department over \$50,000 and was part of the 18% cut. Commissioner Blackwell said he did not understand the selection process.

Commissioner Baggett noted how much money the county has taken out of the Fund Balance over the past couple of years. He said to go from \$22.4 million in FY01 to \$4.6 in FY02 is a big drop. He suggested we look at taking more out of the fund balance and decrease our use gradually instead of this big drop. He noted it will take about \$5.7 million to put our people back to work. The options we have to raise the money is tax increase and to use some more of our fund balance.

Commissioner Blackwell inquired if the Board would be willing to cut all salaries by 5% which would save about \$3.1 million.

Commissioner King pointed out that a 5% cut plus the \$1.7 million the Board has would possibly keep most of our people from losing their jobs.

Commissioner Edge inquired about how many full time positions are being cut. The answer is 131.

Commissioner Henley said he was against the band-aid approach to a major problem. He said decreasing the salary range is not a good thing to do. He noted the importance of doing what needs to be done, do it right so we have a budget we can sustain.

Chairman Warren noted that these cuts will affect 131 families. He suggested we use \$4 million out of the fund balance, plus the \$1.7 million, and put the employees back to work and through attrition make the cuts.

Commissioner Baggett inquired if there is any merit pay in the budget this year. The answer is no. He suggested maybe reducing salaries 2.5% and take the rest out of the fund balance to put the employees back to work.

James Martin, County Manager, noted by taking more out of the Fund Balance, we are digging ourselves into a deeper hole.

Commissioner Henley noted this county is running out of money and we have to run it as a business. He inquired if we would be willing to freeze positions that become vacant. He said we need to learn how to operate in a more efficient manner.

Commissioner Edge said he agreed with Commissioner Henley. He said we asked the Manager to bring the Board a budget with no tax increase, which is what he has done. He said to go into the Fund Balance would just create a bigger problem next year. He noted everyone is having to cut, including the state.

Commissioner Henley noted that the schools will take us to mediation and from there to court. The County may have to come up with some money as a result of this. He said higher taxes will depress construction in the county. He said we might could use some of the \$1.7 million to put some people back to work.

Commissioner Blackwell suggested we keep the \$1.7 million for any emergency we might have in this next fiscal year.

Commissioner Henley said he could support spending the \$1.7 million and keeping 10% in the Fund Balance.

Commissioner Edge pointed out that when you cut a sitting employee's salary they become less productive.

Commissioner Warren inquired how much money it would take for a 2% merit/COL increase. It will take about \$1.4 million.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:45PM