

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AND
CUMBERLAND COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
117 DICK STREET, 1ST FLOOR, ROOM 119
SEPTEMBER 27, 2011, 7:30 AM
MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Kenneth Edge, Chairman
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Charles Evans
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe
Commissioner Billy King
Commissioner Ed Melvin
James Martin, County Manager
James Lawson, Assistant County Manager
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney
Sally Shutt, Communication and Strategic Initiatives Manager
Jon Soles, Multimedia Specialist
Candice H. White, Clerk to the Board
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk to the Board
Press

COMMISSIONERS

ABSENT: Commissioner Marshall Faircloth, Vice-Chairman

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Representative Marvin W. Lucas, 42nd District
Representative Elmer Floyd, 43rd District
Representative Diane Parfitt, 44th District
Representative Rick Glazier, 45th District
Representative William Brisson, 22nd District

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Senator Wesley Meredith, 19th District
Senator Eric Mansfield, 21st District

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Edge called the meeting to order and explained Commissioner Marshall Faircloth was unable to attend due to his being out of town. Chairman Edge thanked members of the legislative delegation for their series of meetings with local leaders and stated he was appreciative of the dialogue.

Chairman Edge opened the floor up to Representative Glazier.

2. OPEN DISCUSSION

Representative Glazier introduced the legislative members in attendance and stated Senator Eric Mansfield and Senator Wesley Meredith were unable to attend.

Representative Glazier stated the legislative members called this meeting to touch on three items: 1) a review of budget ramifications; 2) to anticipate what might happen later this fall; and 3) to anticipate what might happen this spring. Representative Glazier stated he also wanted to hear from the county regarding any impacts it anticipates and also to hear what the county has heard coming out of Washington, DC.

Representative Glazier advised the deficit was reduced by over 2 billion with the revenue generated from the additional one cent sales tax and the income tax surcharge on higher income taxpayers coupled with a 16% cut in the university system; about a 10% cut in community colleges; and about a 7% cut in public schools. Representative Glazier further advised there were substantial hits in the health and human services field, which may double or triple depending on matches from the federal government. Representative Glazier stated between \$300 million and \$700 million cuts will be closed this fall in the health and human services budgets through cuts in particular services and reductions in eligibility, and there are ongoing discussions regarding cuts in provider rates. Representative Glazier stated there is also an ongoing constitutional debate between Superior Court Judge Howard Manning, the Governor and the legislature over pre-school programs, and what is unclear is the court's order that all children who are eligible must be served and without fee. Representative Glazier stated the additional price tag would be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$300 to \$400 million. Representative Glazier advised the Governor had issued an order that those positions are to be created with all deliberate speed and no fees are to be charged. Representative Glazier stated Speaker Thom Tillis and majority leader Phil Berger have appealed Judge Manning's decision to the NC Court of Appeals and there will be a decision early next year, which may then go to the Supreme Court.

On another matter, Representative Glazier stated the Department of Justice has taken the position that the placement of mental health patients in adult care homes violates their civil rights, that North Carolina must cease and desist from this practice, and must move with deliberate speed to relocate those 5,000 to 6,000 patients from adult care beds into either scattered site housing or into other forms of housing within the community where they can be treated without institutionalization. Representative Glazier stated other states seem to be able to comply where North Carolina can not, and this will have a direct affect on counties like Cumberland who have a significant number of patients being housed in adult care homes. Representative Glazier stated meetings have been convened with individuals in the construction industry, Department of Social Services Director Brenda Jackson, and Mental Health Director Hank Debnam to see if state and federal funds can be pulled together to develop prototype housing because it is anticipated this decision will go into effect very quickly.

Representative Glazier also advised the delegation will be called back on November 7, 2011 for the fifth session of the long session and possible agenda topics will include economic development projects; hammering out an agreement between the Cherokee Tribe and the state on additional gambling capacity and how much the state will receive; voter identification, procedures, and laws; and whether to cap or not cap the gas tax. Representative Glazier stated the delegation will return in the spring and if there continues to be no revenue increase, he is fearful there will be very large budget cuts again. Representative Glazier stated his hope is that there will be a shift in his colleagues' views regarding revenues out of the necessity for jobs and moving the state forward.

Chairman Edge opened the floor up for questions and comments. Commissioners Evans and King posed questions regarding adult group homes in Cumberland County. Representatives Glazier and Parfitt explained what other states have done with scattered site home placements by pooling federal, state, and private sector monies in order to get people with mental illness out of state institutions and into community care. Discussion followed regarding other mental health issues.

Representative Glazier expressed support for family court and drug court, and stated everyone should lobby next year to avoid cuts to these programs as well as look for funds for a veterans' court. Representative Glazier stated the real unemployment rate in the state is 15% plus, and the underemployment rate is well over 20% to 22%. Representative Glazier also stated close to one-third of young African American males are unemployed or under-employed. Representative Glazier spoke to discrepancies in education and employment levels in minority communities and stated it may be helpful to have a task force of city and county officials, members of the state legislative delegation, and the congressional delegation to talk about what the continuing effects are going to be on services for the unemployed and their families. Representative Glazier stated the effects are spiraling in a way that affects the children of those families and it will be years before families will be able to recover.

Representative Lucas spoke to additional problems that are being driven by the economy such as the loss of jobs and benefits, and effects now being seen on retirement. Representative Lucas stated the only solution he knows of is for the state to start spending more money and to take an ingenious approach to funding its retirement system. Representative Lucas also stated there is some talk of increasing the retirement age.

Commissioner Council stated she could not understand why economic development was steered away from Cumberland County to other parts of the state, especially when Cumberland County is located where it is and has so much to offer. Commissioner Council asked members of the legislative delegation to remember Cumberland County when it comes to economic development. Commissioner Council also stated she supported pre-kindergarten, but the county can't house the students and has school buildings in need of major repairs.

Commissioner Evans stated he would like to see statewide adoption of "Ban the Box" on employment applications as a means to cut down on recidivism and asked the legislative

delegation to push the initiative. Representative Glazier spoke to Representative Garland Pierce's push in this area and stated he would be participating in a forum related to issues of joblessness and re-entry into jobs following incarceration. Discussion turned to cuts in education and re-education programs that will likely lead to higher drop out rates and greater jail populations.

Commissioner King stated North Carolina has some challenges in the years to come with the economy being the way it is and suggested that cuts be balanced with revenue enhancements. Representative Glazier stated public debate has moved from low taxes to no taxes, and no taxes means the destruction of government because there has to be income for basic government services. Representative Glazier further stated teachers, law enforcement, children's services, and disaster relief workers are the public's taxes.

Representative Brisson spoke to the increase in drug usage and expressed concern for the impact felony charges will have on the younger generation.

Representative Glazier stated this year has seen the largest cuts to community colleges and universities in North Carolina's history and for the first time community colleges are turning away students. Representative Glazier explained the growing tuition/scholarship dichotomy and the need to fight surcharges placed on students who are unable to complete college under a four-year plan. Commissioner Keefe spoke to the need for and benefits of vocational high school programs that will enable individuals who are not suited for four-year college degrees to secure gainful employment.

James Martin, County Manager, noted that North Carolina did not have a deep water port to accommodate super-sized tankers and asked the delegation if they were aware of a feasibility study that might create this opportunity for North Carolina. Representative Glazier explained that efforts are being held up by legislators for those districts in which the ports would be located.

Chairman Edge stated following the sale of Rhodes Pond to the Sandhills Area Land Trust, concerns had been expressed that the property was not being maintained and that the Department of Transportation had built a shed on the property. Chairman Edge asked the legislative delegation if there was anything they could do in response to the concerns. Representative Glazier explained there was a tour with the Wildlife Commission last year and an agreement was reached that all gates would be repaired and the pond would be dredged and restocked with fish. Representative Glazier stated these things have been accomplished. Representative Glazier also stated a deal had been negotiated that would split the area with the maintenance depot so that half of it could be reopened as a scenic outlook with picnic tables. Representative Glazier stated the delegation should probably contact the Wildlife Commission and ask that they have another meeting with the citizens who have expressed the concerns.

Representative Floyd provided closing comments.

Chairman Edge thanked members of the legislative delegation for their time and the excellent dialogue.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Approved with/without revision:

Respectfully submitted,

Candice H. White
Clerk to the Board