

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FY 2018 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING/WORK SESSION
117 DICK STREET, 1ST FLOOR, ROOM 118
JUNE 5, 2017 7:00 PM
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Glenn Adams, Chairman
Commissioner Charles Evans
Commissioner Michael Boose
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Marshall Faircloth
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe
Commissioner Larry Lancaster
Amy Cannon, County Manager
Melissa Cardinali, Assistant County Manager
Sally Shutt, Assistant County Manager
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney
Vicki Evans, Finance Director
Deborah Shaw, Budget Analyst
Heather Harris, Budget Analyst
Bob Tucker, Accounting Supervisor
Jeffrey Brown, Engineering and Infrastructure Director
Brenda Jackson, Social Services Director
Joe Utley, Tax Administrator
Geneve Mankel, Communications and Outreach Coordinator
Candice White, Clerk to the Board
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk to the Board
Press

Chairman Adams called the special meeting to order and stated the purpose of the meeting is to hear from citizens regarding the proposed FY18 budget. Commissioner Lancaster provided the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

Chairman Adams called on Amy Cannon, County Manager, who explained the Board of Commissioners' procedures for public hearings.

Candice White, Clerk to the Board, advised there were twenty-six speakers signed up for the public hearing.

This is the duly advertised/noticed public hearing set for this date and time.

Chairman Adams opened the public hearing.

The clerk to the board called the following speakers:

Alizdair Ray – Alizdair spoke in support of the library. Alizdair stated the library provides so much to everyone and has helped in his academic development.

Willie Wright – Mr. Wright spoke on behalf of the library and asked that the hours not be reduced because the library assists individuals with getting jobs, adds to the financial base of the County, assists with early literacy, provides access to computers and assists schools with STEM research.

Glenda Dye –Ms. Dye stated as the director of the Area Agency on Aging with the Mid-Carolina Council of Governments, her agency, together with the Cumberland County Council of Older Adults, are proposed to receive a funding cut of \$45,344. Ms. Dye stated there will be a cut in services for the block grant when you affect both agencies and with the growth of the population reaching 60 and with life spans being longer, her hope is that the reduction of services can be minimized.

Anne Hodges – Ms. Hodges appeared as a representative of the Arts Council and thanked the Board for their continued support of the Arts Council. Ms. Hodges stated the funding allows the Arts Council to touch over 500 people in this area through festivals, performances, exhibits, programs, classes and other cultural arts activities. Ms. Hodges also mentioned sessions for the misdemeanor program for at-risk youth.

Jackie Taylor – Ms. Taylor begged the Board not to cut funding for the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults' Meals-on-Wheels program. Ms. Taylor explained what the program means to its recipients.

Steve O'Connor – Mr. O'Connor spoke in favor of not eliminating the Law Library and cited the 1953 private session law of the General Assembly, Session Law HB 1186, Chapter 1158. Mr. O'Connor stated the proposed budget asks the Board to eliminate what the General Assembly created. Mr. O'Connor stated under state law, facilities fees collected by the Clerk of Superior Courts on lawsuits filed are supposed to go into a County fund to pay for things including the Law Library. Mr. O'Connor spoke to increased usage of the Law Library.

Cheri Beth Thomas – Ms. Thomas appeared as an employee of the Public Health Dental Clinic and the parent of a child utilizing the Dental Clinic. Ms. Thomas spoke to dentist coverage and dental services provided to children who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

Melessia Polk – Ms. Polk appeared as an employee of the Public Health Dental Clinic for 22 years and spoke to the countless children helped over those years. Ms. Polk stated to discontinue their care constitutes abandonment. Ms. Polk asked the Board not to discontinue funding for the Dental Clinic.

Del'veria Marengo – Ms. Marengo spoke as an employee of the Public Health Dental Clinic and stated as a dental hygienist, she provides screenings for elementary school children. Ms. Marengo asked the Board to consider keeping the Dental Clinic open.

Lisa O'Connor – Ms. O'Connor read a letter from Robby Hicks, Senior Assistant District Attorney and former President of the Cumberland County Bar, requesting the protection and strengthening of the Cumberland County Court Law Library.

Terri Thomas – Ms. Thomas spoke on behalf of the Vision Resource Center and what County funding has provided for the visually impaired and the blind. Ms. Thomas stated she hopes the Center will continue to stay in the County's budget.

Nicole Corbett – Ms. Corbett spoke as a client of the Vision Resource Center and what the Center has helped her accomplish. Ms. Corbett stated the Center needs the funding.

Patricia Cavalier – Ms. Cavalier spoke as a client of the Vision Resource Center and stated the funding is important because it helps with transportation, programming, daily living and mobility skills, and Braille and technology skills.

Daniel Montoya – Mr. Montoya spoke as chair of the Library Board of Trustees and thanked the Board for its continued support of the library. Mr. Montoya stated everyone will be touched by the proposed changes to the library's budget and the access to knowledge, job applications and training it provides.

Charles Nwosu – Mr. Nwosu stated he cannot do without the services provided by the Vision Resource Center as it teaches its clients independence and helps keep their minds and spirits alive.

Amy Garner – Ms. Garner appeared as president of the Friends of the Library and stated cutting services and the budget will negatively impact the community's

infrastructure. Ms. Garner asked the Board to have another look at the library's budget.

Jeff Polk – Mr. Polk stated his wife is an employee of the Public Health Dental Clinic and an advocate for those served by the Dental Clinic. Mr. Polk spoke to mismanagement of the resources and funds at the Dental Clinic and asked the Board to consider those who cannot get dental care elsewhere.

Jamie Jones – Mr. Jones spoke on behalf of the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults' Meals-on-Wheels program and his volunteer hours with the same. Mr. Jones stated he helps recipients of the program with other tasks since they cannot get out.

Don Williams – Mr. Williams spoke on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club and the wide range of programs and activities it provides. Mr. Williams stated kids with disadvantaged backgrounds will not be able to afford or participate without funding support. Mr. Williams thanked the Board for its past support.

Roberta Waddle – Ms. Waddle spoke to her lifetime experience as a user of the library and stated it is much more than a book depository and received national recognition. Ms. Waddle stated the library is a jewel in the community and she hoped the Board will fund the library in a way we can be proud of.

Ken Dye – Mr. Dye appeared as the Nutrition Director of the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults and asked the Board to avoid the 15% funding cut due to the number of clients and meals served by Meals-on-Wheels.

Mark Kendrick – Mr. Kendrick spoke to programs provided by the Vision Resource Center and the minimal staff involved. Mr. Kendrick stated the Center is able to do a lot with very little money.

Pat Whitfield – Ms. Whitfield spoke as an advocate for children and the Public Health Dental Clinic. Ms. Whitfield stated without the Dental Clinic, children may not have the opportunity to get dental work done and there may be transportation issues if children have to go to other facilities. Ms. Whitfield asked the Board to think about the effect closing of the Dental Clinic will have on the community.

Brandon Akins – Mr. Akins stated he is a clinical therapist and cannot believe the County is thinking about closing the Law Library. Mr. Akins stated pro se litigants utilize the Law Library and to close it is like denying them due process.

Robert Walls – Mr. Walls stated he heard all the arguments made, they are all good and a better county is an educated county. Mr. Walls stated he sees mismanagement leading to this budget crisis, everyone needs to do better and all issues deserve another look.

David Spurlock – Mr. Spurlock spoke on behalf of the Public Health Dental Clinic, those who lost jobs and therefore lost their insurance and children who fall through the cracks. Mr. Spurlock stated he has taken his children to the Dental Clinic and pulling funding is a bad idea. Mr. Spurlock asked the Board to reconsider.

There being no further speakers, Chairman Adams closed the public hearing.

Chairman Adams thanked the speakers and stated the Board of Commissioners will take their comments into consideration.

MOTION: Chairman Adams moved to recess the Board of Commissioners' meeting and reconvene the meeting in room 564.

SECOND: Commissioner Evans

VOTE: UNANIMOUS (7-0)

Chairman Adams called the reconvened meeting to order. Discussion followed regarding comments made during the public hearing. Commissioner Keefe asked whether the Department of Social Services had any programs that would help the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults. Brenda Jackson, Social Services Director, stated individuals can always apply for the income-based Food and Nutrition program through Senior Services, but the Department of Social Services does not have a Meals-on-Wheels program. Commissioner Keefe asked staff to look into this.

Chairman Adams stated the Southeast North Carolina Reading Radio, Cumberland County Veterans Council, Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults, the Boys and Girls Club and the Child Advocacy Center stood out to him and he would like to find funding for them.

Discussion followed about the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults' Meals-on-Wheels program. Commissioner Keefe pointed out that the lump sum funding given to the Cumberland County Coordinating Council on Older Adults is not contingent on its funding any particular program and it is up to the agency to determine how the funds are spent. Commissioner Keefe asked about other sources of funding for the agency. Ms. Cannon stated she will make that information available.

Chairman Adams referenced letters sent to some of the non-profits in April notifying those receiving community funding of potential reductions and stated some of them already had budgets and commitments lined up so funding cuts could make it difficult for them.

Discussion continued about balancing the budget with additional revenue and/or reductions in service levels and positions. Commissioner Faircloth stated he is currently looking for revenue neutral with cuts equal to 4 cents or approximately \$8 million. Commissioner Faircloth stated his thinking is if the budget is passed at the recommended total tax rate of 82.2 cents, there is likely to be a big surplus at the end of the next year. Commissioner Keefe referenced the large number of requests for repairs and maintenance and those authorized at 100%, and asked if they could be prioritized. Commissioner Keefe stated his goal, if possible, is to get to revenue neutral. Commissioner Boose posed questions about possible cuts to some of the maintenance and renovation items as a means to fund other items.

Commissioner Keefe stated with the revenue neutral tax rate and the proposed tax increase by Fayetteville, this community will have the highest tax rate in the state. Commissioner Keefe stated for purposes of economic development, this community has to remain as competitive as it possibly can. Chairman Adams stated he does not necessarily want to have the highest rate but at the same time he believes that if the County does not take care of what it has and prepare for the future, the Board will return next year and the year after to do the same thing.

Chairman Adams suggested that commissioners meet with management to get clarification on potential reductions and/or strategies and bring them back to the next budget work session.

MOTION: Commissioner Evans moved to adjourn.

SECOND: Chairman Adams

VOTE: UNANIMOUS (7-0)

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Approved with/without revision:

Respectfully submitted,

Candice H. White
Clerk to the Board