

April 30, 2018

A Special Meeting regarding FY 2018-19 Draft Budget of the Bladen County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, April 30, 2018 at 4:30 pm in the Commissioner's Room on the lower level of the Courthouse, 106 East Broad Street, Elizabethtown, NC.

Members present were:

Ray Britt, Chairman
Charles R. Peterson
Daniel Dowless
Arthur Bullock
Dr. Ophelia Munn-Goins
Russell Priest
Ashley Trivette
David Gooden

Excused: Michael Cogdell

ITEM 1. Call to Order:

Chairman Britt called the meeting to order at 4:34pm. Prior to the invocation, Chairman Britt stated that Vice Chair Cogdell was out of town for a family emergency. He asked that those in attendance to remember the family in thought and prayer.

Chairman Britt also shared an invitation to the Board members to attend an upcoming memorial service at the Detention and Law Enforcement Center at 10am on Wednesday, May 16, 2018.

Commissioner Munn-Goins provided an invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 2. Fiscal Year 2018-19 Draft Budget Information and Discussion: (Greg Martin, County Manager)

- A. Mr. Martin reviewed questions which arose during the April 18, 2018 budget meeting. Upon completion of research and some information received from the Bladen County Schools Finance Committee, it appears that the current year county appropriation to Bladen County Schools will be approximately \$1.7 million short of their draft FY 2019 budget. Additional information was requested by the Board including the number of students who are now enrolled in Bladen County Schools from Columbus Charter; the number of students anticipated to be enrolled in Bladen County charter schools in the upcoming year; state budget cuts to schools systems and the anticipated effect on county budgets.

Mr. Martin also reminded the Board that the bond for East and West Bladen construction projects will be retired in 2021. The ongoing plan is to continue budgeting "debt service" expense in future budgets to create a capital project cushion, with a floor of \$750,000 annually.

Mr. Martin also located and shared information regarding Charter School Facilities (NCGS 115C-218.35), about which Commissioner Cogdell had inquired during the previous budget meeting. Mr. Martin reviewed the statute for information, noting the strong language, as follows:

§ 115C-218.35. Charter school facilities.

(a) A charter school's specific location shall not be prescribed or limited by a local board or other authority except a zoning authority. The school may lease space from a local board of education or as is otherwise lawful in the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located. If a charter school leases space from a sectarian organization, the charter school classes and students shall be physically separated from any parochial students, and there shall be no religious artifacts, symbols, iconography, or materials on display in the charter school's entrance, classrooms, or hallways. Furthermore, if a charter school leases space

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from a sectarian organization, the charter school shall not use the name of that organization in the name of the charter school.

(b) At the request of the charter school, the local board of education of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school will be located shall lease any available building or land to the charter school unless the board demonstrates that the lease is not economically or practically feasible or that the local board does not have adequate classroom space to meet its enrollment needs. For the purposes of this section, a building or land is available if it is closed, vacant, or otherwise unused for classrooms, administrative offices, or extracurricular activities of the schools of the local board of education. Notwithstanding any other law, a local board of education may provide a school facility to a charter school free of charge; however, the charter school is responsible for the maintenance of and insurance for the school facility.

(c) The local board of education shall make a decision on the charter's request to lease a building or land within 90 days of the request. If the local board of education does not make a decision within 90 days of the request of the charter school, the local board of education shall provide a written explanation of its reasons for not acting on the request within the 90-day time period to the North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

(d) If a charter school has requested to lease available buildings or land and is unable to reach an agreement with the local board of education, the charter school shall have the right to appeal to the board of county commissioners in which the building or land is located. The board of county commissioners shall have the final decision-making authority on the leasing of the available building or land. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 731, s. 2; 1997-430, s. 4; 2013-355, s. 1(e); 2014-101, s. 7; 2016-79, s. 1.8.)

Chairman Britt stated that he believes there would be value in appealing to the NC Legislature on behalf of rural counties and rural public school systems to allow school construction projects based on charter school standards. He stated that Bladen County might be able to build 3-4 facilities using charter school standards in place of one facility based on state-mandated construction standards.

Mr. Martin shared that Bladen Community College and Bladen County Schools have each requested to be included on the May 7, 2018 agenda to discuss budget requests for FY 2018-19. In the interim, Mr. Martin stated that the low bid for a roof project included in the FY 17-18 budget is less than the amount budgeted for this project. Those unspent funds could be rolled into the FY 18-19 budget to fund other capital projects which have been requested.

Mr. Martin reviewed a number of items which were discussed at the previous budget meeting, including, but not limited to:

- the addition of a new type III ambulance
- the reduction of one (1) stretcher
- the removal of a QRV
- the removal of a VIPER radio for the deleted QRV

Additional conversation was held regarding the QRV and its high mileage. The vehicle which is to be retired is showing 157,000 miles. It is a 4-wheel drive which is needed in order to haul trailers with equipment, generators, etc.

Employee compensation and benefits were discussed as well. Estimates were calculated to reflect a 1% COLA and a 2% COLA. These figures were shared for information only.

Mr. Martin briefly discussed a community recreation matching grant program. A draft policy was developed in 2017 but not yet adopted or implemented.

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Mr. Martin stated that since the last budget meeting, he had inquired regarding the possibility of county employees installing large HVAC units at the Powell-Melvin building. Mr. Martin stated that according to the Building Inspections Department, based on the size of the building and the HVAC units, specific certifications would be required for installation. Mr. Martin stated that there are a couple of HVAC installation companies in Bladen County certified to provide the installation services.

Mr. Martin also shared that Parks & Recreation Director Grant Pait is researching options regarding parking issues at the county park. Mr. Martin stated that it was most challenging when teams and family members arrive for the games scheduled second, when the earlier games are still underway.

Mr. Martin provided a brief update regarding a White Lake water discoloration project. The Town of White Lake has recently signed a contract for a treatment which could correct the issue. The Town of Elizabethtown has indicated its support of the project by pledging financial support in the amount of \$10,000. Mr. Martin stated that White Lake calculates to approximately 10% of the county's tax base. He stated that a resolution for consideration would be included on the Board's agenda for the next regular meeting. Financial support would be included in the resolution. He stated that the Town of White Lake planned to contact the NC Legislature to request a special appropriation to assist in the cost of the project.

Other issues discussed for information were as follows:

- Chemours and GenX
- Recent Smithfield law suit

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bullock, seconded by Commissioner Munn-Goins, the meeting as adjourned at 5:22pm.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, Clerk to the Board

Ray Britt, Chairman