

May 29, 2019

A Special Meeting regarding FY 2019-20 Draft Budget was held on Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 10:00 am in the Commissioners' Room, located on the lower level of the Courthouse, 106 East Broad Street, Elizabethtown, NC.

Members present were:

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman
Michael Cogdell
Daniel Dowless
Russell Priest
Ray Britt
Ashley Trivette
Arthur Bullock (arrived at 10:10am)

Excused: David Gooden
Dr. Ophelia Munn-Goins

ITEM 1. Call to Order:

Chairman Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:07am. Chairman Peterson provided an invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Bullock arrived (10:10am)

ITEM 2. Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget Information and Discussion

A. Mr. Martin reviewed items for information, including, but not limited to:

- Request from County Department
 - DSS Security Measures
- Matters of Interest to the Board
 - Projected Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)
 - Emergency Training Center
 - EMS Staff and Equipment
 - Bladen Community College
- Community Alternatives Program (CAP)
- Juvenile Services

ITEM 3. Discussion:

Mr. Martin provided information regarding a request from DSS Director Vickie Smith regarding addition security measures. He stated that Mrs. Smith had requested two (2) part-time security officers and a metal detector to be installed at the lobby entrance. Mr. Martin provided an overview of current security procedures. He also stated that Mrs. Smith has identified cost savings to assist in funding proposed security efforts.

Following discussion, Sheriff McVicker suggested other efforts to provide additional security measures for other county departments. The Board expressed appreciation for Sheriff McVicker's input.

Discussion was held regarding use of Fund Balance for ongoing expenses versus one-time expenditures, such as capital purchases. Bladen County's fund balance percentage is in the average range for counties approximately the same size (fewer than 50,000 citizens).

Mr. Martin reminded the Board of a decrease in revenues from Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Sales Tax revenues. He stated that it is not apparent if these decreases are anomalies or trends.

Bladen Community College (BCC) may need additional personnel when a newly constructed STEM facility is completed and placed in service.

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Requests for the Emergency Training Center were reviewed. There are a number of ongoing renovation projects on dormitories and a kitchen which have not been completed. It is estimated approximately \$15,000-\$25,000 would be needed to complete dormitory renovations if a contractor were hired to expedite the dormitory project. Mr. Martin reminded the Board that an agreement with the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church Disaster Response Team will allow for volunteers to complete dormitory renovations, working as they can. However, the kitchen renovations estimates are yet to be determined.

Emergency Medical Services Director David Howell addressed the Board regarding staff and equipment. He stated that a position which was initially requested has been determined to no longer needed following a shifting of staff. He stated that additional part-time EMT positions could be funded by the Paramedic position which has been removed from the requested budget. Mr. Martin expressed appreciation to Mr. Howell's budgetary approach.

Mr. Martin provided an update regarding a recently announced overhaul of the State Community Alternatives Program (CAP). He stated that information shared from the State CAP Representative indicated that the positive changes would allow for the county to continue providing CAP services to clients. Bladen County currently has 131 allotted slots, with 120 clients. The revenue model indicates a potential positive cash flow for CAP. Mr. Martin stated that in light of the changes, State CAP representatives suggest that Bladen County strongly consider operating the program for the upcoming fiscal year. Following further discussion, the Board, by consensus, agreed to continue CAP services for FY 2019-20.

Mr. Martin reviewed an email funding request from state-funded Bladen Smart Start. Following discussion, the Board, by consensus, took no action regarding the request.

Mr. Martin also reviewed Juvenile Services and anticipated impact of Raise the Age Legislation. Sixteen and seventeen year old offenders will no longer be able to be housed in a detention center. They will need to be transported to facilities in Cumberland or Buncombe County. The FY 2019-20 anticipated increase in out-of-county housing is approximately \$20,000.

Commissioner Britt stated that he had been informed from a state official that Bladen County has been identified as having the fastest growing Hispanic population in North Carolina. He expressed concern regarding the ability to serve this fast growing population. Mr. Martin reminded the Board that Bladen County has also been designated as a "difficult" county to count related to the upcoming Census.

Chairman Peterson briefly recessed the meeting at 11:26am.

Chairman Peterson reconvened the meeting at 11:36am.

Sheriff McVicker addressed the Board regarding vehicle purchases for FY 2019-20. He stated that by the end of this year, there would be more than 20 vehicles with 100,000 miles or more. He expressed concern regarding vehicle dependability and quick responses to citizens. He shared that retired vehicles (with a mileage cap yet to be determined) could be sold to local municipalities, fire departments, or other responders, for a decent amount. That would allow other local governments to purchase vehicles for a reasonable price. Sheriff McVicker asked that funding for ten (10) vehicles be included in the FY 2019-20 budget. The Board expressed appreciation and asked Sheriff McVicker to provide additional information regarding estimates for the retired vehicle sales, with a cap of 100,000 miles for retained vehicles.

Sheriff McVicker also inquired regarding an increased budget request for controlled purchases from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for the upcoming year. He shared that drug-related arrests have increased over the past several years. He shared that as of May 2019, 110 arrests have been directly related to controlled drug purchases.

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Following discussion regarding potential security and/or emergency situations, Chairman Peterson asked for information regarding county safety/security to be presented to the Board. A study has already been completed by Gary Turlington and Barry Pait. Sheriff McVicker asked that emergency response plans be addressed during Closed Session.

County Manager Greg Martin stated that he would contact Department Managers to identify cost cutting efforts to fund a potential Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

Chairman Peterson polled Board members regarding other questions, requests, etc. No other items were presented for consideration.

Commissioner Cogdell inquired regarding property tax rate. Mr. Martin stated that there is no property tax increase reflected in the proposed budget.

Chairman Peterson asked that Board members seriously consider supporting a ¼ to ½ cent sales tax increase.

By consensus, the meeting as adjourned at 11:58am.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, NCCCC
Clerk to the Board

Charles R. Peterson, Chairman