

June 4, 2018

A Special Meeting regarding FY 2018-19 Proposed Budget of the Bladen County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, June 4, 2018 at 4:00 pm in the Commissioner's Room on the lower level of the Courthouse, 106 East Broad Street, Elizabethtown, NC.

Members present were:

Michael Cogdell, Vice Chairman

Charles R. Peterson

Daniel Dowless

Arthur Bullock

Dr. Ophelia Munn-Goins (arrived at 4:05pm)

Russell Priest (arrived at 4:30pm)

Ashley Trivette (arrived at 4:09pm)

David Gooden

Excused: Chairman Ray Britt

ITEM 1. Call to Order:

Vice Chairman Cogdell called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

Vice Chairman Cogdell provided an invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 2. Fiscal Year 2018-19 Proposed Budget Information and Discussion:

- A. Vice Chairman Cogdell recognized Division on Aging Director Kelly Robeson to address the Board.

Mrs. Robeson expressed appreciation and requested that a part-time Nutrition Coordinator position be reclassified to a full-time position.

Commissioner Munn-Goins arrived at the meeting (4:05pm).

Mr. Martin stated that the County had received information regarding additional funding for Division on Aging in the amount of \$20,477 which can be used to assist in offsetting the reclassification of the part-time position to a full-time position. He stated that the effect on budget is approximately \$6,375.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Gooden, the Board unanimously approved reclassifying a part-time Nutrition Coordinator position to a full-time Nutrition Coordination position.

Vice Chairman Cogdell recognized Bladen Community College President Dr. William Findt to address the Board.

Dr. Findt expressed appreciation regarding the Board's proposed FY 2018-19 allocation to BCC, which reflects fully funding the College's request. He provided a brief overview of a list of capital projects for information. He stated that the auditorium roof project may be completed at a significant cost savings. He briefly discussed the possibility of using the savings toward additional capital projects, which include adjacent land purchase and funding toward a required Master Plan update.

Additional information was requested of Dr. Findt which included details for the Early College program and a request for repairs recommended for a building used by BCC in East Arcadia. Dr. Findt indicated that he would forward additional information via email regarding the Early College program as well as recommended repairs to the East Arcadia facility.

Commissioner Trivette entered the meeting at 4:09pm.

Dr. Findt indicated that the East Arcadia repair project was included in the FY 2017-18 budget request, but was not funded at that time. He chose not to include the request again this year, but he did question the potential liability of utilizing a facility in disrepair.

Vice Chairman Cogdell expressed appreciation to Dr. Findt and congratulated him on his upcoming retirement.

Vice Chairman Cogdell then opened the floor for the Board to discuss any concerns or items for consideration.

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Commissioner Peterson wished to discuss an inmate labor agreement with the NC Department of Public Safety. Currently, the County, Town of Elizabethtown, Town of White Lake, and the Town of Clarkton, utilize inmates from the Tabor City facility to provide support and services. Commissioner Peterson inquired if utilizing misdemeanor inmates would save the county funds. Mr. Martin stated that the fixed costs for the inmates from Tabor City (mileage, driver and vehicle) are all shared among the participating local governments. He stated that between each of the municipalities and county, there are 21 inmates which are contracted for labor. Commissioner Peterson inquired if a feasibility study could be completed to see if utilizing the misdemeanor program inmates would save the county and municipalities funds. Mr. Martin indicated that he would research the possibility.

Commissioner Peterson inquired regarding a recently proposed Information Technology (IT) position for the Sheriff's Office. The proposed duties would include responsibility for first responder radio support. He inquired of IT Director Robin Hewett regarding a Department of Social Services (DSS) IT position. Mr. Hewett stated that another option has been identified which may assist in removing some of the tedious password maintenance.

Mr. Hewett also shared that a switch has been purchased to replace a failing switch which serves the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) building.

Commissioner Munn-Goins inquired regarding the DSS IT position for clarification. Mr. Hewett stated that he had received training since the previous budget meeting which provided an option which was not apparent earlier.

The Board agreed to wait until Emergency Services Director Bradley Kinlaw is available to receive additional information regarding a Sheriff's Office IT position with radio responsibilities.

Commissioner Peterson voiced concern regarding a \$251,000 increase which has been included in the proposed FY 2018-19 allocation to Bladen County Schools. He stated that until the Board of Education has a specific plan for a construction project he would like to discuss the possibility of using the \$251,000 to assist with funding a 3% COLA and four (4) additional detention officer positions.

Commissioner Priest arrived at the meeting (4:30pm).

Following discussion, Commissioner Peterson made a motion to move contingency funds in the amount of \$251,000 for Bladen County Schools to the General Fund to offset a portion of the 3% COLA and additional detention officers. Commissioner Gooden provided a second.

Vice Chairman Cogdell called for discussion. Mr. Martin indicated that the Bladen County Schools would view that as a reduction in budget allocation. He indicated that the proposed increase for BC Schools is 2%, plus \$251,000, which is approximately a \$1.7 million increase over current year allocation.

Vice Chairman Cogdell briefly recessed the meeting at 4:42pm.

Vice Chairman Cogdell reconvened the meeting at 4:55pm.

Commissioner Peterson provided an amended motion, seconded by Commissioner Dowless, to reduce the proposed FY 2018-19 allocation by \$251,000 and retain those funds to assist in offsetting COLA's for county employees and the additional detention officer positions. Following discussion for clarification, the Board unanimously approved the amended motion.

Mr. Martin reminded the Board that the school bond debt for the two high schools will be retired in 2021. He also stated that the County reserves approximately \$900,000 annually from funds generated by Articles 40 & 42 Sales Tax to fund the school bond debt payment. In addition to that, in the past budget year, the county approximately \$750,000 of county funds were required to meet the annual debt payment of approximately \$1,650,000. In the current year budget, the total school bond debt payment is \$45,937 less than the previous year. He stated that for in order to maintain a floor of

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\$750,000 annually, the county budget shows a reserve of approximately \$46,000. In 2021 when the debt service is retired, there should be approximately \$1,650,000 to assist with any new school project. The annual reserve amount will increase each year to maintain the \$750,000 floor annually.

Following discussion regarding Bladen County Schools, Mr. Martin stated that he would reach out to Dr. Taylor and invite him to attend the upcoming Special Meeting scheduled for 4pm on Wednesday, June 6, 2018.

Commissioner Peterson voiced his concern regarding past due property tax dollars and foreclosures. He stated that some properties carry more expense than the value of the property which have been foreclosed. Mr. Martin stated that he would ask Tax Assessor Renee Davis to provide information regarding the process by which properties are foreclosed, and including a policy which was approved several years ago regarding payment plans.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Trivette, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:30pm.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, Clerk to the Board

Ray Britt, Chairman