

June 15, 2009

The Duplin County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, June 15, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium at the Duplin Commons Office Complex, (165 Agriculture Drive), Kenansville, North Carolina.

Present: Chairman Cary Turner and Commissioners David Fussell, Frances Parks, Harold Raynor, Reginald Wells, and Zettie Williams

Absent: None

Also Present: Mr. Mike Aldridge, County Manager; Ms. Julia Herring, Administrative Officer; Ms. Teresa Lanier, Finance Officer; and Ms. Wendy Sivori, County Attorney

Commissioner Harold Raynor gave the invocation.

The following reports were received by the board and are on file with the clerk:

Animal Control – May 2009
Building Inspections – May 2009
Cabin Lake – May 2009
Communications – May 2009
Health Department – May 2009
Library – May 2009
Manager’s Office – May 2009
Register of Deeds – May 2009
Soil & Water – May 2009
Water Department – May 2009

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to approve the Consent Agenda which included the following – Budget Amendments #0236 - #0244; Solid Waste Releases #6346 - #6348; Tax Releases #6340 - #6350; and to add Budget Amendments #0245 - #0257; to add a discussion on education funding; a request to defer discussion of demolishing the old Chinquapin School until the July 6, 2009 board meeting; a request to schedule a public hearing for the Community Development Block Grant Program; and a “Notice to the Low Bidder” for the Rosemary Sewer Project and Water District A.

Mr. Mike Aldridge presented Administrative Budget Amendments #K506 - #L568, Motor Vehicle Releases – May 2009 - \$6,081.03, and a GovDeals.com summary to be made part of the minutes.

Public Comments:

Mr. Dexter Edwards of Beulaville thanked the board for lowering the property tax rate. He urged the board to reconsider promoting a ¼ cent sales tax option because it would generate approximately \$800,000 in revenue verses \$350,000 generated by a one cent increase in property tax.

Ms. Dean Johnson of Warsaw thanked the board for lowering the property tax rate. She thanked Commissioner Wells for attending a board of education meeting and inviting them to a joint meeting with the board of commissioners even though the BOE didn’t respond. She stated that she would like to see both boards make better decisions before considering a tax increase.

Dr. Ken Newbold of Rose Hill spoke about the financial responsibility of the board of commissioners to fund education. He stated that the county is only responsible to build, operate, and maintain schools. Dr. Newbold stated that salaries for board of education administrators are way out of line in comparison to the salaries of the teachers, and teachers are the most important personnel in the school system. (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Jack Zoesh of Wallace stated that the bickering between the board of commissioners and board of education should stop because it could affect new businesses locating to Duplin County. He thanked the board for hiring Evergreen Solutions, LLC to conduct an audit on the county.

Mr. Dave Gray of Wallace spoke in support of Duplin County's teachers. He discussed the recent photo in *The Wallace Enterprise* that showed teachers begging for their jobs not to be cut. He stated that most of the blame for the financial situation of the schools is because of the misdirection of the million dollars allotted to the board of education from the county in 2006, the lawsuit filed against the county by the board of education, the BOE not considering implementing the recommendations by Evergreen Solutions to save \$15 million, and the attempt by the BOE to make parents believe that athletics and ROTC would be cut in the upcoming school year. (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Win Batten, Mayor of Warsaw, urged the commissioners to consider building new schools while the cost of construction is down.

Mr. Ed Hudson, Jr. of Calypso spoke about the great education he received in Duplin County Schools verses the education the current generation is receiving. Mr. Hudson stated that increased spending does not generate increased education. (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Hank Frey of Wallace, thanked the board for putting together a tight budget and for directing the board of education on the use of county funds. He stated that the school system has too many support personnel in comparison to teaching positions. (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Jimmy Dixon of Warsaw, urged everyone that spoke during public comments to attend and speak at the Duplin County Board of Education meeting. He stated that unlike the commissioners' meetings in which the public has the opportunity to speak at each meeting, the board of education has public comment at the first meeting of each month. Mr. Dixon stated that the next BOE meeting in which public comment is allowed would be July 2, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. He complimented the board of commissioners for the budget but stated that more cuts should have been made. Mr. Dixon stated that he would like to be on record as a "formal protest" of three different revenue neutral tax rates being published before the final tax rate of .6943. He stated that there should be more communication between the tax office and the county manager regarding collections and the tax rate.

Mr. Aldridge responded that the final tax rate is uncertain until final collections are received and updated by the tax office. He reviewed the proposed 2009-10 budget ordinance. (See handout in minutes.)

The board of commissioners thanked Mr. Aldridge and staff for their work on preparing the budget.

Motion was made by Commissioner Fussell, seconded by Commissioner Raynor, carried unanimously, to adopt the 2009-10 budget ordinance setting the tax rate as follows and thereby authorizing the chairman to sign same: General Fund - \$.69; Oak Wolfe Fire District - \$.05; Glisson Fire District - \$.065; Sarecta Fire District - \$.055; East Duplin Fire District - \$.0458; Albertson Fire District - \$.075; Stacy Britt Fire District - \$.063; Northeast Fire District - \$.0382; and Franklin Fire District - \$.0689.

Ms. Donna Rouse, Soil & Water Director, presented a contract for stream debris removal for the Limestone and Muddy Creek Watershed Project. She recommended that the contract be awarded to the lowest bidder, Blizzard Construction of Beulaville. Ms. Rouse stated that the contract total was \$127,857.01 but funding in the amount of \$93,106.88 is available in the current budget to begin the work. The remainder will be paid from the FY 2009-10 budget. (See handout in minutes.)

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to approve the Stream Debris Removal Contract for Limestone and Muddy Creek Watershed Project in the amount of \$93,106.88 to S. Ashley Blizzard III of Blizzard Construction, Inc. and authorize the chairman to sign same.

Ms. Millie Brown, Social Services Director, appeared before the board to discuss compensation for members of the DSS Board of Directors that was cut by the board of commissioners in the FY 2009-10 budget. Members of this board are paid \$75 per month to serve on the board in order to cover travel and other related expenses. Mr. Coolidge Turner, Chairman of the DSS Board of Directors, was present and urged commissioners not to cut the compensation.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Williams, to leave the compensation of \$75 per month in place for members of the DSS Board of Directors.

Commissioner Fussell stated that there are numerous county boards that are not compensated.

Commissioner Parks requested to be excused from voting since she serves on the DSS Board of Directors.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously, to excuse Commissioner Parks from voting on this matter.

Motion was made by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner Fussell, carried unanimously, to defer this matter for 30 days in order to review all county boards and whether compensation is required by North Carolina General Statutes.

Commissioner Fussell introduced Mr. Richard White of Whitewood Management Associates of Wallace. Mr. White gave a PowerPoint presentation on education funding titled "Duplin County – A Low Wealth County or Just Poor in Comparison". (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Joe McKemey of McDavid Associates appeared before the board to discuss several projects.

Mr. McKemey discussed the Rosemary Sanitary Sewer / Phase 2 Project. He stated that bids were received on June 2, 2009 to install approximately 1700 linear feet of gravity sewer lines along Pool Road and Blount Street in the Rosemary Community south of Rose Hill with the low bid at \$210,433.90 from State Utility Contractors, Inc. Mr. McKemey stated that the project is grant-funded from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously, to adopt the "Resolution Amending Capital Budget Project Ordinance and Awarding Construction Contract for 06/Rosemary Sanitary Sewer Phase 2".

Mr. McKemey discussed the 2008 Rural Center Water Systems Improvement Project – Contract 32 and 35 for the Albertson Water and Sewer District.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to go into session as the Albertson Water District.

The board returned to Regular Session.

Mr. McKemey discussed the 2006 Rural Center Water Systems Improvement Project – Contract 90 for Water District E.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously, to go into session as Water District E.

The board returned to Regular Session.

Mr. McKemey discussed the final budget ordinance for the 1999 Clean Water Project for Water System Improvements for Water District D.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously, to go into session as Water District D.

The board returned to Regular Session.

Mr. Aldridge stated that Mr. Randall Tyndall, Planning Director, is requesting the reappointment of the following planning board members: Mr. Marshall Britt – District II; Ms. Bobbie Jean Rivenbark – District IV; and Ms. Tina Murphy – District VI. He stated that all three have two-year terms that are due to expire on June 30th.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to reappoint Mr. Marshall Britt, Ms. Tina Murphy, and Ms. Bobbie Jean Rivenbark to the Duplin County Planning Board for a two-year term effective July 1, 2009.

Mr. Aldridge discussed bids received for the mowing contract to mow the Duplin Commons and library tracts totaling approximately 50 acres. He stated that four bids were received with the lowest responsive bid at \$1,272 from Mr. Cecil Beamon of Kenansville. Mr. Aldridge recommended that the county maintenance staff continue to mow. (See handout in minutes.)

Commissioner Fussell inquired about the cost of the bid received verses the cost of the county mowing the two tracts.

Motion was made by Commissioner Fussell, seconded by Commissioner Williams, carried unanimously, to defer this matter until the county manager can conduct a cost comparison of the county staff and the bid received from Mr. Beamon and provide the comparison in writing to the board.

Mr. Aldridge presented a contract for the NC Farmland Preservation Trust Fund recently approved by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The application to apply for the \$39,530 grant was approved at the December 1, 2008 board meeting. (See handout in minutes.)

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to accept the grant and authorize the chairman to sign the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Contract.

Mr. Aldridge presented the agreement for inmate labor from the North Carolina Department of Correction. He stated two inmates are used by the transportation department and aging departments at a cost of \$520 annually. (See handout in minutes.)

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to approve the agreement with the NC Department of Corrections for inmate labor and authorize the chairman to sign same.

Mr. Aldridge presented a summary of equipment to be purchased for the E911 Dispatch Center provided by Mr. Brian Pearce, EMS Director. He stated that the purchase will be in the amount of \$313,773 for radio equipment from E911 funds designated for this purpose. (See handout in minutes.)

Mr. Aldridge stated that a public hearing would need to be held regarding the 2009 Scattered Site Housing Community Development Block Grant application cycle on July 6th and July 20th.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wells, seconded by Commissioner Parks, carried unanimously, to schedule a public hearing for July 6, 2009 and July 20, 2009.

Mr. Aldridge reminded the board that a meeting would need to be held on June 30th to closeout for the end of the fiscal year.

The board recessed to meet again on Tuesday, June 30, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, County Administration Building (224 Seminary Street), Kenansville, North Carolina.

Clerk