

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION
May 15, 2018

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at 5:37 P.M., with the following members present: Chairman Gary D. Blevins, Vice Chairman Eddie Settle, Commissioner Keith Elmore, Commissioner David Gambill and Commissioner Greg Minton.

Also present were John Yates, County Manager; Jerry Shepherd, Finance Director; Chris Huffman, Assistant Finance Officer; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Gary D. Blevins welcomed everyone and called the Work Session to order.

INVOCATION – Commissioner David Gambill led the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Gary D. Blevins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

FINANCIAL INTEREST REPORT – Chris Huffman presented the March 2018 cash and investment information that included a breakdown of the return on investment funds. He briefly explained how these are invested with NC Capital Management Trust as requested at the May 5, 2018 Budget Work Session.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION: Chairman Blevins stated there are things that have been requested that County Manager John Yates did not include in the recommended budget. Not necessarily because they were not willing to look at them or fund them, but some are new additional requests and at this point it comes down to the Board of Commissioners deciding what is the best use of the funds for Wilkes County. A large amount of the budget is mandated, he added.

SHERIFF DEPARTMENT – Mr. Yates stated the Sheriff has requested more money for his salaries line item and there has also been discussion of 4 more SRO Officers for the Schools. The Board discussed the \$500,000 salary request plus \$125,000 to cover benefits. The plan includes Deputies, Detention Center, and Communications Center, all 130 employees. The Board discussed this is something they need to look into and work on to take care of this year if they can, as that is what they told Chris Shew last year. The Board discussed more information is needed on the percentage of raises this would be and verify who is getting them to make sure it is the lowest paid and where they have the turn over issues.

BOARD OF EDUCATION – Chairman Blevins said last year they made sacrifices in other areas for Public Education, they always need more funding in the public school system. He added if the legislature gives a large increase to teachers as being discussed this will impact what the county has to fund. This has not been decided at this time. The Board discussed funding 4 SRO officers at an estimated cost of over \$200,000 with benefits. This would not include the

equipment, auto, and uniform cost. They said this would be a re-occurring cost as with any salary increases. The Board would like more information on this from the Sheriff Department. They discussed the need for the State to step in and come up with the money to fund SRO Officers as well as the school system. They would like to have more information on the cost and where the money is coming from to pay for this, other than fund balance.

Mr. Yates said the current appropriation is \$13,042,046, which is a 2% increase; \$650,000 for capital outlay, total to schools is \$15,995,371. They requested \$13,986,320, he added. Vice Chairman Settle stated Mr. Holbrook could not be at this meeting due to a funeral. He added he was told if the state passes the 6% increase in Teachers' salaries they will need \$450,000 more in supplemental salaries from the county. Plus another \$150,000, he said. They have been told the state is giving this increase. This will need to be factored in to the budget, it is hard to put this in without knowing if this raise is going to happen. The state needs to decide what they are going to do and how this will be funded. The Board asked if the state gives the raises why \$600,000 more needed. Mr. Yates stated the county funds several employees for the school and they want to give them all the same raises. The board asked if this goes toward the per-child funding, or ADM. Mr. Yates and Mr. Shepherd replied yes. The Board said they increased the per-child funding by over \$1 million last year, which is also included in the appropriation this year, and is reoccurring. The Board discussed some options and will make a decision on this later, once they get more information. They added they can't do a whole lot more than they did last year. The Board discussed that the 2% appropriation increase of \$255,726 will have to be a portion of the additional \$600,000 they have requested.

WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE – Commissioner Elmore said Dr. Cox asked him to bring something to the Board for consideration. WCC runs a different schedule than K-12, their employees are one month behind. They would like to extend their year by 2-weeks, one week before school starts to prepare and one week after to wrap up. Commissioner Elmore said this would cost \$140,000, it would help the instructors with more pay and they would be better prepared. He added it sounded good to him and would like to make this request. This was not in their budget request, but is in their strategic plan. Commissioner Elmore said if the Board is going to pull from fund balance to cover the K-12, he wants to add this for the Boards consideration. WCC is having to compete with the school system, they work one month less, this would help them work the same and increase their salaries. The Board discussed WCC works 9 months and K-12 works 10 months, both get extra time off compared to folks that work a full year. Commissioner Elmore said they do want to recruit and retain quality instructions at WCC and this will help. Mr. Yates said the proposed budget includes \$366,000 salary supplement; \$150,000 capital outlay; Bond match \$202,000 (second of five); for a total of \$4,033,345 to WCC.

LIBRARY – Chairman Blevins said the Library has requested additional funds, the Board understands this, but has had a significant amount of capital expenditures at the Library this year. The Board has spent a lot of money on the Library that didn't necessarily go to programing and staffing, but was spent for the benefit of the Library and all that use it. Vice Chairman Settle asked if Ashe dropped out of the region. He added they have been told Watauga funded their request. Mr. Yates replied he has not heard what Ashe has decided. The Board discussed

Wilkes gave the Library increases in years when the others did not and those need to catch up with Wilkes. Vice Chairman Settle said the request was to increase salaries. He would like a study to see if bringing the library into the county would save money or cost more, and would the employees make more. The Board discussed maybe the LGC would have information on this. They said being part of a region does give them some benefits, but the regional office which they do help fund, is not in Wilkes. They discussed the many good programs at the Library, and said they have many tough decisions this year. Mr. Yates said the request is \$46,358 more than the appropriation that is recommended. The Board stated the Library does a good job; they will discuss this more and make a decision with more information provided by Vice Chairman Settle at the next work session.

RESCUE SQUAD – Chairman Blevins stated there is an additional request from the Rescue Squad. Mr. Yates added at the time the budget was presented that had not submitted their request and have ask for \$15,000 more. The appropriation last year was \$135,000 and they have requested more for operations. He said they have a new Captain and he was not aware of the deadline to turn in the request.

Commissioner Gambill said they are starting to work much better with the Fire Departments and build a good relationship, which they are very happy to see. Commissioner Minton added they are providing specialized training on site as well. Eddie Price with EMS said they carry all the same medication as EMS does and provided specialized training on ropes, water rescue, and more. Commissioner Minton added they are on standby more for EMS now as well. Mr. Price agreed. Vice Chairman Settle added they are at every youth football game in the county and do a good job.

After some discussion the Board consensus was to add \$15,000 to the Rescue Squad appropriation.

SOIL & WATER TRUCK REQUEST – Mr. Shepherd stated this was in Rob Baldwin's budget request, but it was not printed in the book and he takes responsibility for this error. Mr. Yates added it was a truck request for Soil & Water at a cost of \$35,000. Mr. Baldwin said currently they have a jeep that came from the Landfill with 100,000 miles when they got it, and an old K-9 unit car. Chairman Blevins ask if they have to use their own vehicles. Mr. Baldwin said yes, sometimes they do. Chairman Blevins asked if something from the car pool can be pulled out for them, could they make this work for another year. Mr. Yates replied they is what they have done in the past when they have a need. Mr. Baldwin said he understands the issues the Board faces. He said the garage has negotiated with Modern Chevrolet, this is a \$50,000 truck quoted for \$35,000. This would equal \$3,500 per year over 10-years, which is what they expect it to last, if not longer. Mr. Yates said the garage will get quotes from many places on any purchases made. The Board said they will take this under advisement and have a final decision at or after the next work session. They Board stated they appreciate Mr. Baldwin and the great job he and his staff do to support agriculture in Wilkes. Mr. Yates added they received a great grant this year as well. Mr. Baldwin said it is in the amount of \$865,000.

TAX APPRAISAL TECHNICIAN – Alex Hamilton is requesting to hire one additional person in the tax office. Chairman Blevins said he told Mr. Hamilton they would discuss this request. It is always tough to add staff, especially when the budget is not growing as this is a reoccurring cost. He added Mr. Hamilton offered to come tonight and he told him to wait. The Board asked if this was in his original request and was cut out. Mr. Yates replied yes, he did not think they had the money to add staff this year. Chairman Blevins said Mr. Hamilton asked for the Board to review this request. He told him they will review it and consider his request.

Commissioner Gambill said he would like to add one additional item for consideration that he asked Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Yates to prepare. He said this is for all county employees and would fix the gap and compression. They come in and did the pay study, the economy declined, and they did not get to implement the full process. Commissioner Gambill said this will help to fix some of the compression between new employees and the ones that have been here several years. He realizes money is tight and asks for consideration from the Board. This is a good and fair option and will help across the Board for everyone. (Option 1: 5% increase for employees with more than 5 years and 2% for less than 5 years with a cost of \$787,787.)

Commissioner Elmore stated he is and always has been in favor of going from 37.5 hour to a 40 hour work week and asked if this is included in the Option 1 proposal. Commissioner Gambill replied it is not. Commissioner Elmore said he believes this would help, it is the fairest way and would give all employees a raise. This would also put them on the same level as other counties that work 40 hours. Mr. Shepherd stated this will not affect Law Enforcement, EMS, Landfill, or others that already work a different schedule. Chairman Blevins added the 37.5 work week goes way back and they are unsure of who implemented it or why, and could have been a cost savings measure at the time. Mr. Shepherd said he has been with the county 30 years and this has been in place prior to that. Mr. Yates added the cost to go to a 40 hour work week is \$828,115. If a 2% COLA is given for all employees that adds \$201,143, for a total of \$1,029,258, he said.

ADJOURN - Motion was made by Commissioner Keith Elmore, seconded by Commissioner David Gambill and by unanimous vote adopted to adjourn the Budget Work Session of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at 6:48 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gary D. Blevins, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: